United Nations E/CN.6/2006/1

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
12 December 2005

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fiftieth session
27 February-10 March 2006
Item 2 of the provisional agenda
Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Annotated provisional agenda and proposed organization of work

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century":
   (a) Review of gender mainstreaming in entities of the United Nations system;
   (b) Emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men;
   (c) Implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives:
      (i) Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work;
      (ii) Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels.
4. Communications concerning the status of women.
5. Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions.
6. Provisional agenda for the fifty-first session of the Commission.
7. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fiftieth session.

05-63667 (E) 301205

Annotations

1. Election of officers

In accordance with rule 15[1] of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, and pursuant to Council resolution 1987/21 and decision 2002/234, the Commission held its first meeting of its fiftieth session on 22 March 2005 and elected, by acclamation, Ms. Carmen María Gallardo (El Salvador) as Chairperson and Ms. Adekunbi Abibat Sonaike (Nigeria), Ms. Szilvia Szabo (Hungary), Mr. Dicky Tomar (Indonesia) and Mr. Thomas Woodroffe (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) as Vice-Chairpersons of the fiftieth and fifty-first sessions of the Commission.

The Commission will also designate a Vice-Chairperson to serve as Vice-Chairperson-cum-Rapporteur.

The Commission will further approve the nomination of two candidates to fill the pending vacancies on the Working Group on Communications on the Status of Women established in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1983/27.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Rule 7 of the rules of procedure provides that the Commission shall, at the beginning of each session, adopt the agenda for that session on the basis of the provisional agenda.

The provisional agenda and documentation for the fiftieth session of the Commission were approved by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 2005/299.

Preparations for the fiftieth session of the Commission were undertaken in accordance with its agreed conclusions 1996/1 on methods of work. Accordingly, the Bureau of the Commission held several meetings as well as informal briefings and consultations with all interested delegations to consider the organization and methods of work for the session.

As per past practice, statements delivered by representatives of delegations of Members and Observers of the Commission during general discussions shall be limited to five minutes, and statements made on behalf of groups of delegations to ten minutes. It is also recommended that interventions from non-governmental organizations be integrated into the general debate, taking into consideration their geographical location, and that they also participate in each of the panels on the thematic issues.

[1] The list of members of the Commission at its fiftieth session is included in annex II to the present report.

3. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

(a) Review of gender mainstreaming in entities of the United Nations system

Review of methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women

The General Assembly, in paragraph 46 of its resolution 57/270 B, requested the functional commissions to examine their methods of work and to report on the outcome of that examination to the Council no later than 2005.

At its forty-eighth session, the Commission adopted decision 48/101 containing specific actions to enhance its working methods, and decided, at its forty-ninth session, to continue its discussions on the subject at its fiftieth session (decision 49/101).

Multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women

In 1987, the Economic and Social Council endorsed the Commission's proposed multi-year work programme. In accordance with Council decision 2005/299, the Commission will develop a multi-year programme of work for the period 2007-2011. In this regard, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Commission with recommendations for enhancing its methods of work as well as proposals for future themes (General Assembly resolution 60/140).

Measures taken and progress achieved in the follow-up to and implementation of the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly: review of progress made in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes

In section III, paragraph 5, of its resolution 1996/6, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit an annual report under item 3, on measures taken and progress achieved in the follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the progress achieved in mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system. This request was most recently reiterated in General Assembly resolution 60/140. The Commission will have before it the requested report.

In paragraph 10 of its resolution 49/4, the Commission requested the Secretary-General to report to it, at its fiftieth session, on progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes, bearing in mind its two thematic issues as outlined in its multi-year programme of work.

Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

In its resolution 2005/43 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council requested the Commission to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, in particular paragraph 260 concerning

Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. It also requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, assist Palestinian women by all available means and to submit to the Commission at its fiftieth session a report on the progress made in the implementation of that resolution.

Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan

In its resolution 2005/8 on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan and to submit to the Commission, at its fiftieth session, a report on the progress made in the implementation of that resolution.

Release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts

In its resolution 48/3, the Commission requested the Secretary-General and all relevant international organizations to use their capabilities and undertake efforts to facilitate the immediate release of civilian women and children taken hostage. It also requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission at its fiftieth session a report on the implementation of that resolution, taking into account the information provided by States and relevant international organizations. The report of the Secretary-General is before the Commission.

Joint workplan on the human rights of women

In its resolution 39/5, the Commission requested the Secretary-General to see to the preparation of a joint workplan on the human rights of women for the then Centre for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women on an annual basis. In paragraph 11 of its resolution 2005/42, the Commission on Human Rights welcomed the cooperation and coordination between the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) aimed at mainstreaming the human rights of women, including through their joint workplan. The Secretary-General was encouraged to ensure implementation of the joint workplan, to continue to elaborate this plan on an annual basis, reflecting all aspects of work under way and the lessons learned, to identify obstacles/impediments and areas for further collaboration and to submit them to the Commission on Human Rights and to the Commission on the Status of Women on a regular basis (see Commission on Human Rights resolution 2005/42, para. 13). The Commission will have before it the joint workplan.

Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system

In its resolution 59/164, on the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide an oral report to the Commission at its forty-ninth and fiftieth sessions on the implementation of that resolution, including by providing up-to-date statistics on the number and percentage of women in all organizational units and at all levels throughout the United Nations system. The Commission will hear an oral report by

the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women on that resolution.

Violence against women

In its resolution 50/166 on the role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in eliminating violence against women, the General Assembly requested the Fund to include in its regular reports information on the establishment of a trust fund in support of national, regional and international actions to eliminate violence against women and to provide such information to both the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights. The Commission on the Status of Women will be provided with such information.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

In accordance with article 21.2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the reports of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women are transmitted to the Commission for its information. The report of the Committee on its thirty-second and thirty-third sessions and a note transmitting the results of the Committee's thirty-fourth session (16 January to 3 February 2006) will be before the Commission.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on measures taken and progress achieved in the follow-up to and implementation of the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly: review of progress made in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes (E/CN.6/2006/2)

Report of the Secretary-General on proposals for a multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/CN.6/2006/3)

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/CN.6/2006/4)

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan (E/CN.6/2006/5)

Report of the Secretary-General on the release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts (E/CN.6/2006/6)

Report of the Secretary-General on the joint workplan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (E/CN.6/2006/9-E/CN.4/2006/59)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting information provided by the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/166 (E/CN.4/2006/10)

Note by the Secretariat transmitting the results of the thirty-fourth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (E/CN.6/2005/CRP.1)

Documentation for information

Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its thirty-second and thirty-third sessions (A/60/38)

Note by the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (A/60/271)

(b) Emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men

In its resolution 1996/6, the Economic and Social Council decided to include in the agenda of the Commission a sub-item entitled "Emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men" under the item entitled "Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women". It also requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on emerging issues under that sub-item, as appropriate, at the request of the Commission or its Bureau.

A High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development will be held in New York on 14 and 15 September 2006. The General Assembly, in paragraph 19 of its resolution 60/222 of 23 December 2005, noted that the Commission on Population and Development, the Commission on Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women would consider the issue of international migration within their respective mandates by the time of the High-level Dialogue, and invited their inputs through the Economic and Social Council.

The Commission on the Status of Women will hold a high-level panel on the theme "The Gender Dimensions of International Migration". A Chairperson's summary will be submitted, through the Economic and Social Council, to the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.

(c) Implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

High-level round table

In its decision 46/101, the Commission decided that, starting from its forty-seventh session, it would introduce the option of high-level round tables and authorized the Bureau, after consultation with all interested Members of the Commission through the regional groups, to decide on the number, timing and theme of such round tables.

Further to consultations, the Bureau decided that the high-level round table to be organized at the fiftieth session of the Commission would be held under the theme "Incorporating gender perspectives into the national development strategies on implementation of the internationally agreed development goals requested in the 2005 World Summit". The Commission will have before it a discussion guide on the round table.

Documentation

Discussion guide on the high-level round table. Note by the Bureau (E/CN.6/2006/CRP.2)

Thematic issues

In its resolution 2001/4, the Council adopted the multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women for 2002-2006, including a calendar for considering the implementation of strategic objectives and actions in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives. The following two themes were identified for 2006: (a) enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work; and (b) equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work (E/CN.6/2006/12)

Report of the Secretary-General on equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels (E/CN.6/2006/13)

4. Communications concerning the status of women

In its resolution 76 (V), the Council established a procedure by which the Commission would receive and consider communications relating to the status of women. In its resolution 304 I (XI), the Council amended resolution 76 (V) and requested the Secretary-General to compile, before each session of the Commission, a list of confidential and non-confidential communications, containing a brief indication of the substance of each communication.

In its resolution 1983/27, the Council reaffirmed the mandate of the Commission to consider confidential and non-confidential communications on the status of women and authorized the Commission to appoint a working group to consider such communications and prepare a report thereon for the Commission.

In its resolution 1993/11, the Council reaffirmed that the Commission was empowered to make recommendations to the Council on what action should be taken on emerging trends and patterns of discrimination against women revealed by such communications.

In its decision 2002/235, the Council decided, in order to make the communications procedure of the Commission more effective and efficient:

(a) That the Commission, starting at its forty-seventh session, should appoint, at each session, the members of the Working Group on Communications on the Status of Women for the next session so that the members would be able to meet to enable the Secretariat to issue their report three working days before the adoption of the agenda by the Commission;

(b) To request the Secretary-General:

(i) To inform Governments about each communication pertaining to them that will be considered by the Commission and give them at least

12 weeks before the consideration of such communications by the Working Group, and

(ii) To ensure that the members of the Working Group receive in advance the lists of communications, including replies from Governments, if any, to be taken into account in preparing its report for examination by the Commission.

At its forty-eighth session, in its resolution 48/103, the Commission decided to postpone further consideration of the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2004/11 and Add.1) on the future work of the Working Group on Communications on the Status of Women and the different views and proposals put forward by Member States during the debate on the item until its fiftieth session.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the confidential list of communications concerning the status of women (E/CN.6/2006/SW/Communications List No. 40)

Future work of the Working Group on Communications on the Status of Women (E/CN.6/2004/11 and Add.1 and 2)

5. **Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions**

The Commission will have before it a letter of the President of the Council on follow-up to the Council's policy guidance.

The Council, in its resolution 2001/27, invited its functional commissions to provide concise, action-oriented input to its annual high-level segment. The Commission will have before it a note by the Secretariat as an input to the 2006 high-level segment of the Council on "Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development".

Documentation

Letter dated 21 December 2005 from the President of the Economic and Social Council to the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/CN.6/2006/14)

Note by the Secretariat as an input to the 2006 high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council (E/CN.6/2006/CRP.4)

6. **Provisional agenda for the fifty-first session of the Commission**

In accordance with rule 9 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions, the Commission will have before it a draft provisional agenda for its fifty-first session, including the list of documents to be submitted for its consideration.

7. **Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fiftieth session**

In accordance with rule 37 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Council, the Commission shall submit to the Council a report on the work of its fiftieth session.

Annex I

Proposed organization of work

Date/time	*Agenda item*	*Programme*
Monday, 27 February		
10 a.m.	1 Election of officers	Designation of the Vice-Chairperson-cum-Rapporteur Approval of nominees to membership in the Working Group on Communications
	2 Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters	
	3 Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"	Introduction of reports General discussion
3 p.m.	3 (c) Implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives	High-level round table on the theme: Incorporating gender perspectives into the national development strategies on implementation of the internationally agreed development goals requested in the 2005 World Summit
Tuesday, 28 February		
10 a.m.	3 (c) (i) Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work — Panel I	Panel of experts: presentation and dialogue
3 p.m.	3 (c) (ii) Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels — Panel II	Panel of experts: presentation and dialogue
Wednesday, 1 March		
10 a.m.	3 (*continued*)	General discussion
3 p.m.	3 (*continued*)	General discussion

Date/time	*Agenda item*	*Programme*
Thursday, 2 March		
10 a.m.	3 (*continued*)	General discussion
3 p.m.	Item 3 (b) Emerging issues	High-level panel on the theme "*The Gender Dimensions of International Migration*"
Friday, 3 March		
10 a.m.	3 (c) (i) (*continued*)	Informal consultations (Agreed conclusions — Panel I)
3 p.m.	3 (c) (i) (*continued*)	Informal consultations (Agreed conclusions — Panel II)
Monday, 6 March		
10 a.m.	3 (c) (i) (*continued*)	Informal consultations (Agreed conclusions — Panel I)
3 p.m.	3 (*continued*)	Informal consultations
Tuesday, 7 March		
10 a.m.	3 (*continued*)	Informal consultations (Agreed conclusions — Panel II)
		Informal consultations
3 p.m.	3 (*continued*)	Introduction of draft proposals
	3 (*continued*)	Informal consultations
Wednesday, 8 March		
10 a.m.-12 noon	(Commemorative event)[a]	Observance of International Women's Day (2 hours)
12 noon-1 p.m.	5 Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions	
3 p.m.	4 Communications concerning the status of women	Closed meeting to consider the report of the Working Group on Communications
	3 (*continued*)	Informal consultations
Thursday, 9 March		
10 a.m.	3 (c) (*continued*)	Informal consultations
3 p.m.	3 (*continued*)	Action on draft proposals
	3 (*continued*)	Informal consultations

Date/time	*Agenda item*	*Programme*
Friday, 10 March		
10 a.m.	**3 (*continued*)**	**Action on draft proposals**
	6 Provisional agenda of the fifty-first session of the Commission	**Consideration of the draft provisional agenda for the fifty-first session of the Commission**
3 p.m.	**7 Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fiftieth session**	**Adoption of the report**
		Closure of the session

[a] Informal event to be held on the margin of the fiftieth session of the Commission.

Annex II

Membership of the Commission on the Status of Women at its fiftieth session (2006)

(45 members; four-year term)

Membership	*Term expires at close of session in the year*
Algeria	2007
Armenia	2007
Belgium	2007
Belize	2009
Bolivia	2007
Botswana	2006
Burkina Faso	2006
Canada	2007
China	2008
Congo	2007
Croatia	2009
Cuba	2006
Dominican Republic	2008
El Salvador	2008
Gabon	2006
Germany	2009
Ghana	2008
Guatemala	2006
Hungary	2008
Iceland	2008
India	2007
Indonesia	2006
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	2006
Japan	2009
Kazakhstan	2008

Membership	*Term expires at close of session in the year*
Malaysia	2006
Mali	2009
Mauritius	2008
Morocco	2009
Netherlands	2009
Nicaragua	2006
Nigeria	2007
Peru	2009
Qatar	2009
Republic of Korea	2006
Russian Federation	2007
South Africa	2006
Sudan	2006
Suriname	2008
Thailand	2007
Turkey	2007
United Arab Emirates	2006
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	2009
United Republic of Tanzania	2009
United States of America	2008

United Nations E/CN.6/2006/2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
22 November 2005

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fiftieth session
27 February-10 March 2006
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": review of gender mainstreaming in organizations of the United Nations system

Measures taken and progress achieved in the follow-up to and implementation of the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly: review of progress made in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted in response to Commission on the Status of Women resolution 49/4 and General Assembly resolution 60/140, assesses progress made on gender mainstreaming at the national level by Governments. It also provides information on actions taken by entities of the United Nations system to support the efforts of Governments. Particular focus is given to the two thematic issues before the Commission on the Status of Women at its fiftieth session. The report does not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of activities at the national level but rather provides illustrative examples.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

05-61426 (E) 191205

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–4	3
II.	Gender mainstreaming at the national level	5–56	3
	A. Specific policies and action plans on gender mainstreaming	5–9	3
	B. Incorporation of gender perspectives into sector policies and programmes	10–19	5
	1. Education	12–13	5
	2. Health	14	6
	3. Work	15–16	6
	4. Decision-making	17–19	6
	C. Gender-sensitive budgets	20–24	7
	D. Institutional mechanisms	25–56	8
	1. Sex disaggregated data and indicators	25–30	8
	2. Capacity-building	31–35	9
	3. Methodologies and tools	36–37	10
	4. Human and financial resources	38–43	10
	5. Monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms	44–49	11
	6. Role of national mechanisms	50–56	12
III.	Activities of entities of the United Nations system to support national level implementation of gender mainstreaming	57–65	13
IV.	Conclusions and recommendations	66–74	16

I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 60/140, requested the Secretary-General to continue to report annually to the Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women on the follow-up to and progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the Assembly, with an assessment of progress on gender mainstreaming, including information on key achievements, lessons learned and good practices, and to recommend further measures to enhance implementation.

2. The Commission on the Status of Women, at its forty-ninth session, adopted resolution 49/4, in which it requested the Secretary-General to report to its fiftieth session on progress made in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes, bearing in mind its two thematic issues outlined in its multi-year programme of work.[1]

3. The present report is submitted in response to these two resolutions. The report assesses progress made on gender mainstreaming at the national level, on the basis of information contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century",[2] and inputs from Member States to update this information.[3]

4. The analysis of activities carried out by Member States is complemented by examples of how the entities of the United Nations system have supported gender mainstreaming at the national level.[4] The report concludes with recommendations for further action by Member States and the United Nations system for the consideration of the Commission on the Status of Women at its fiftieth session.

II. Gender mainstreaming at the national level

A. Specific policies and action plans on gender mainstreaming

5. Since the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, many countries have developed policies and action plans on gender mainstreaming, some of which include specific timelines and targets. The Women's Plan of Action of Fiji for mainstreaming of women and gender concerns (1998-2008) aims, inter alia, to enhance sectoral commitment to gender mainstreaming; strengthen the enabling environment, including the gender responsiveness of Government processes; engender macroeconomic policies and national budgetary policies and procedures; and strengthen institutional capacity, including in monitoring progress. The Netherlands adopted "Gender mainstreaming: a strategy for quality improvement (2001-2006)" to ensure top-level commitment within departments, develop clear targets, determine responsibility for gender mainstreaming, foster gender expertise and make human and financial resources available for implementation. Similarly, Denmark included clear targets, frameworks and timetables in its five-year action plan for gender mainstreaming (2002-2006).

6. Several Governments[5] reported on important revisions of initial strategies for gender mainstreaming that further clarified the mandate and built on experiences gained and lessons learned. In Finland, the Act on Equality states that the promotion of gender equality is the task of all Government ministries and that gender mainstreaming must be carried out in the entire State administration. The revised version of the Gender Equality Act of Norway (2002) enhanced the responsibility for gender mainstreaming in public policies. In Austria, the Council of Ministers adopted a third resolution on gender mainstreaming in March 2004 that provided for explicit implementation of gender mainstreaming at the federal level.

7. In Indonesia, the importance of gender mainstreaming was strengthened through the issuance of presidential instruction 9/2000 on gender mainstreaming in national development, which requested all Government agencies at the national and subnational levels to integrate gender perspectives into planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes, projects and activities of the ministries, Government agencies, governors and mayors. In New Zealand, Government departments are required to prepare gender implication statements to the Cabinet Social Development Committee. The second National Plan for Equality of Portugal states that each Ministry has to appoint a Councillor for Equality to be responsible for preparing an annual ministerial gender mainstreaming plan.

8. To support gender mainstreaming in line ministries and other relevant bodies at national level, several countries[6] developed specific gender mainstreaming policies and action plans for different sector areas, such as trade, science and technology, poverty reduction, agriculture, employment, environment and health. The Department of Trade and Industry of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland developed a public service agreement on gender mainstreaming to ensure measurable improvements across a range of indicators in all departments by 2006. Brazil held its first national conference on women policies in July 2004 to prepare guidelines for gender mainstreaming in national policies. The National Institute of Women in Costa Rica developed a plan for rural women that addresses gender mainstreaming in the agricultural sector, including capacity-building exercises for all officials.

9. A policy analysis advisory committee was established by the Republic of Korea in 2002 to enforce the legislated mandatory gender impact analysis by national and local governments. As a result of a voluntary programme, 41 national Government bodies and 16 local governing bodies are currently conducting gender-impact analyses. Canada devised a gender-based analysis policy, which is being used to systematically integrate gender perspective into all policies and programmes. During 2004 and the first half of 2005 some 70 gender analyses were carried out in all 47 policy areas addressed by ministries in Sweden, which are now setting up new objectives and indicators for the Government. In 2004, Kyrgyzstan introduced mandatory gender analysis of all draft laws under preparation. Australia launched a major new initiative to develop and test a gender impact assessment tool in its 2003/2004 budget.

B. Incorporation of gender perspectives into sectoral policies and programmes

10. A large number of countries reported on initiatives taken to incorporate gender perspectives in national sector policies, strategies and programmes. A number of countries[7] also reported that gender perspectives have been incorporated in development cooperation policies and strategies. The Department for International Development of the United Kingdom appointed a senior gender and rights adviser in January 2004 to ensure that this process is taken forwards effectively.

11. This section provides illustrative examples of mainstreaming gender perspectives into areas of education, health, work and decision-making.

1. Education

12. Many countries integrated gender perspectives into their education policies and programmes.[8] The Dominican Republic incorporated gender perspectives into its 2003-2012 strategic education development plan. The Ministry of Education of Mexico holds a nationwide contest every year on "Education and the gender perspective: school experiences and didactic proposals", that invites teachers and education personnel to write about their reflections, anecdotes and experiences related to gender equality or problems in implementing gender equality in school life. In 2004 more than 10,000 inputs were received. Ethiopia produced sex disaggregated statistics and indicators at all levels of the education system. Kenya reported that as a result of the Children's Act (2001), which ushered in free primary education, the gender gap in primary education had almost closed (49.9 and 50.1 per cent). Kazakhstan introduced classes on gender equality into higher education, including foundations of gender theory, anthology of gender research and sociology of gender. Indonesia developed and implemented a new model of educational development entitled life skills that targets poor female school dropouts and illiterate girls and women. Liberia established a girls education newsletter, written and edited by girls, to support and disseminate information encouraging all girls to attend and stay in school.

13. Several countries encouraged women to acquire or enhance information and communications technology skills through formal and informal education. A high proportion of girls attended computer classes at the business training centre and computer knowledge centre in Dominica. Finland and Germany supported special projects to develop information and communications technology skills for girls and women, and Germany also supported the promotion of women in information and communications technology jobs. The Ministry of Education in the Netherlands subsidized the participation of girls in primary and secondary schools in information and communications technology competitions, provided advice and offered support in organizing technical courses for girls. Sweden carried out a technical programme aimed at attracting girls to engineering. The Department of Labor in the United States of America carried out a technology programme entitled "Girls' e-mentoring in science, engineering and technology" to provide girls from 13 to 18 years of age with mentoring by connecting them through a listserv and website with professional women in science, engineering and technology professions.[9]

2. Health

14. Almost half of the countries that responded to the questionnaire on the review and appraisal reported on revising, strengthening and amending health-related policies and action plans to include gender perspectives. Iceland set up a committee to ensure that gender perspectives are integrated into the work of health-care institutions and health service providers. El Salvador and Ethiopia reported awareness-raising programmes on mainstreaming gender perspectives in health. France introduced a gender-specific approach to pathology, taking into account the specific health needs of men and women. A number of countries focused on integrating gender perspectives into reproductive health. Bahrain adopted a gender mainstreaming strategy in the health sector and set up national oversight committees. The Ministry of Health of Chile issued guidance on gender mainstreaming in health reform policies, prepared by the Ministry and representatives of civil society and academia. Brazil established a gender-sensitive national women's health policy to guarantee women's human rights and reduce maternal mortality.

3. Work

15. An increasing number of Governments[10] took steps to mainstream gender perspectives into economic policies and programmes, including in the labour market. The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security in Argentina was mandated to incorporate gender perspectives into the design and implementation of all actions relating to employment and professional and technical guidance. In Chile, the National Office of Women's Affairs developed a strategy for gender mainstreaming in the country's major agricultural business organizations, through the Public-Private Committee on Seasonal Farm Work.

16. Some countries reported on specific gender research and analysis undertaken to assess gender discrimination in the labour market. Research undertaken included an urban survey of gender perspectives on remuneration and the cost of labour in Mexico; a study on women in the underground economy in Spain, with special reference to domestic employees; and development of a handbook based on gender analysis of 39 collective agreements of metal and textile workers in Austria. Analysis by the National Labour Market Board of Sweden on occupational segregation in the Swedish labour market led to a strategy obliging every workplace to incorporate gender perspectives in performance analysis and operations planning. The PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies of Estonia conducted a survey on wage differences between women and men in 2004.

4. Decision-making

17. Several countries[11] adopted specific measures to combat vertical discrimination in the labour market by strengthening women's participation in economic policy and decision-making processes. In Namibia, affirmative action was applied to cooperatives with a substantial number of women requiring at least one woman on their boards. In Uruguay, steps were taken to promote female career officers within the National Police forces and to eliminate discriminatory provisions that prevented them from ascending through the ranks to senior positions. A project entitled "Mixed" was launched in the Netherlands in 2002, inter alia, to develop,

distribute and test instruments and resources that would enable upwards mobility of women.

18. Most countries reported plans of action, programmes and projects to improve women's participation at different levels of decision-making. The Nicaraguan Institute for Women trained senior management in political and business organizations, labour unions, trade associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil servants on gender mainstreaming in decision-making as an indicator of democracy. Denmark introduced an allowance for all members of local government to offset childcare expenses and South Africa organized childcare facilities for all members of parliament. Chile organized seminars for politicians on the importance of a quota system for women.

19. Many countries[12] carried out special studies on the role of women in decision-making and organized workshops and conferences to share lessons learned and good practices. In Azerbaijan, a database of women in leadership positions was established; and Maldives published a directory on women in leadership positions in Government. Armenia organized a meeting on women, gender and local self-governance. Switzerland began work with media to improve the public perception of women leaders. The United States developed and implemented training of women leaders as part of international assistance programmes. Zambia established special programmes at university to encourage women's participation in political life. In Finland, public authorities published sex-disaggregated data and indicators on political participation at all levels, for example: voter turnout, candidacies, representatives, committees and indirectly elected organs.

C. Gender-sensitive budgets

20. Over the past decade there has been an increased awareness of the importance of resource allocations and budgets at different levels for the promotion of gender equality. Since 2000, a growing number of countries have taken steps to develop a gender-sensitive approach to budgetary allocations. Many countries[13] reported on initiatives and pilot projects in various ministries, covering different areas, that aimed to incorporate gender perspectives in budget planning. Some of these activities, for example in Botswana, Namibia, Norway and the United Republic of Tanzania, have been carried out in dialogue with NGOs and civil society organizations. The Ministry of Finance of Viet Nam carried out gender assessments as part of surveys and reports on public expenditure. As a result, budget allocations increased in areas such as education, health care, hunger elimination, poverty reduction and capacity-building.

21. Some countries, including Barbados, Botswana, Malaysia and Namibia, reported on activities to strengthen the capacity of Government officials to incorporate gender perspectives into the budget process. Botswana held workshops on gender-responsive budgeting for senior Government officials. In Barbados, a three-day workshop was held for budget analysts and officers of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs and a number of other ministries. The Concept of Gender Policy of Kazakhstan (2003) emphasizes the importance of and need for gender sensitization, expertise and indicators in budget policy, plans and programmes.

22. Some countries developed a variety of tools and methodologies to support gender-sensitive budgeting. The United Republic of Tanzania issued guidelines and a checklist on mainstreaming gender perspectives in sectoral budgets. The National Council for Women of Egypt, in collaboration with line ministries, developed methodologies for gender auditing in national budgets. The Government of the Czech Republic requested the Ministry of Finance to develop a methodology for gender budgeting at national, regional and local levels. Mauritius set up a high-level committee on gender-responsive budgeting to develop a three-year action plan to ensure equitable budgetary distribution of resources in all ministries and departments.

23. Ireland adopted a strategy to mainstream gender perspectives into most of the expenditure of 50 billion euros (€) under the National Development Plan 2000-2006. In Norway, the Government budget proposed to parliament demonstrated increased efforts to integrate gender perspectives into budget considerations — the number of ministries contributing to the report had increased from 8 to nearly all 17 ministries in 2003-2004. Sweden reported that gender mainstreaming, as part of the budget process, had become an integral part of the Government's regular work. In 2004, a Joint Nordic Council of Ministers project on gender-sensitive budgeting was launched and the Council of Europe has organized several activities on the same subject.

24. The National Institute for Women of Honduras carried out a survey on the costs of violence against women and the implication on the national budget.

D. Institutional mechanisms

1. Sex disaggregated data and indicators

25. In acknowledging the need for reliable data and information for gender mainstreaming, particularly to effectively carry out gender analysis, a number of Governments[14] provided examples of efforts taken to improve data collection and development of gender-specific indicators.

26. The Central Bureau of Statistics of Nepal successfully incorporated gender perspectives into its 2002 census, a three-year exercise that had required sensitization of Bureau officials and district census officials and enumerators. The National Institute of Women in Costa Rica worked in cooperation with the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses in developing a pilot study on women's use of time in the domestic environment.

27. Several countries made efforts to improve data collection in specific areas, such as employment, health, agriculture and migration. Bulgaria launched a project entitled "Development of a system of gender-mainstreaming indicators for assessing the quality and efficiency of labour market measures". Nicaragua developed an information system for the agricultural sector that provides data by sex. The National Administrative Department of Statistics of Colombia collected and analysed data on migration and displacement. The Government of Tonga collected data disaggregated by sex in a number of areas, including on employment by industry group and occupation, holders of bank loans and causes of death.

28. Data on employment discrimination by sex was collected by the Ministry of Justice in Poland. The National Commission on the Role of Philippine Women, in

collaboration with the National Statistics Office, conducted a survey on the demographics and living conditions of women workers in one expert processing zone. The National Sample Survey of India on employment and unemployment (1999-2000) yielded new data on the number and situations of homeworkers, a majority of whom were women. Censuses carried out in Germany and Nepal generated gender-specific information on enterprise start-ups and ownership of resources, such as land, livestock and houses. Some countries, for example Kenya and the Republic of Korea, reported on efforts to quantify women's contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP). Time-use surveys had been conducted in several countries,[15] inter alia, to document time spent by women and men in paid and unpaid labour.

29. Some countries created databases with data disaggregated by sex to monitor and evaluate progress in areas such as health and the labour market. Malaysia developed a prototype sex-disaggregated database information system, which will be expanded in cooperation with line ministries and the Department of Statistics. Egypt created a database for the generation, dissemination and updating of gender statistics and indicators.

30. A number of countries prepared statistical publications and training manuals on gender statistics. The publication "Producing gender perspective statistics: administration, measures to prepare and institutionalize guidelines for gender perspective policymaking in Government offices", prepared by the Ministry of Gender Equality of the Republic of Korea, was disseminated to relevant organizations to foster gender-sensitive policymaking.

2. Capacity-building

31. Many responses, including those from the Central African Republic, Djibouti, Dominica, Honduras, Indonesia, Latvia, Malawi, Namibia, Qatar, Switzerland, Thailand and Viet Nam, suggested that the concept of mainstreaming was still not well understood and that efforts are needed to highlight the advantages and contributions of the strategy and develop capacity to implement it. Several countries[16] noted the need for capacity-building for decision makers, planners and implementers in all sectors. Viet Nam, Uruguay and Qatar mentioned the lack of continuity in gender-mainstreaming capacity and commitment related to staff turnover or change of government. Several Member States mentioned the need for continuous training and follow-up and improved coordination and collaboration.[17]

32. Countries from all regions[18] reported a variety of gender-mainstreaming capacity-building activities, including workshops, training programmes, round-table discussions and conferences. Target groups included Government leaders, policymakers, civil servants, members of Administrations, ministerial staff, legislators and members of the judiciary. Some countries set up special mechanisms, such as gender-training resource groups, to provide capacity-building on a systematic basis. Nepal set up a gender unit in the administrative staff college.

33. Barbados implemented a training programme on gender analysis and planning for gender focal points in Government ministries and departments. Uganda made efforts to strengthen the capacity of officials to carry out gender analysis of programmes, planning and budgets. Austria initiated a quality assurance project for gender training in 2003. Latvia developed a training programme for civil servants on gender equality and plans to make the course obligatory. The Government of

Estonia carried out a project on "Development of administrative capacity of national authorities in the field of gender mainstreaming" in the framework of the Poland-Hungary Aid for the Reconstruction of the Economy programme of the European Union. Since 2005, all ministries in Denmark should develop a plan on building competencies on gender mainstreaming within their respective areas.

34. Some countries reported that targeted training programmes on gender mainstreaming for specific sectors have been developed and implemented. In India, gender-sensitization programmes were offered to law enforcement agencies, medical officers and census enumerators. In Malawi, over 3,000 Army Officers were trained in gender and development issues and a team of trainers in gender and HIV/AIDS programmes was created. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia implemented a project on capacity-building for gender-mainstreaming analysis of development practitioners at the national and local level in 2001-2002. The Presidential Council for Equity of Women in Colombia conducted training workshops for staff of ministries, including those working in the fields of energy, mining, justice, agriculture, social protection, statistics and the family.

35. A number of countries reported on gender training in the education sector. For instance, about 350 preschool, elementary and secondary teachers participated in a gender-sensitization programme in Greece. Luxembourg introduced "gender pedagogy" to implement a non-discriminatory education and training system. Cameroon trained more than 600 community leaders to help mobilize society in favour of sending girls to school.

3. Methodologies and tools

36. A number of countries[19] reported on the development of gender impact assessment tools in different sectors, such as health, education and agriculture. The United Kingdom reported that a gender impact assessment handbook had been prepared in Northern Ireland to assist departments to develop action plans and address gender inequalities within their areas of responsibility. Australia developed and tested a gender impact assessment tool based on international good practice, with a view to extending gender analysis in all policymaking activities throughout its Government.

37. A broad range of other tools such as guidelines, checklists, handbooks and manuals was developed to enhance gender mainstreaming efforts across all regions.[20] Sweden produced a manual entitled "Gender-classified statistics — a necessary means for gender equality analysis" for civil servants. Norway introduced a tool, called the "Gender Equality Barometer", which measures achievements in gender representation and access to resources over a broad spectrum of society and identifies good practice examples.

4. Human and financial resources

38. Many countries acknowledged that specialist technical resources, or staff with recognized gender expertise, were needed both within the national machinery and within sectoral ministries and institutions. A number of countries reported a shortage of qualified staff. Belize noted that the lack of human resources impeded its national machinery's ability to train focal points in other ministries and to provide follow-up.

39. A significant number of countries[21] established gender units and/or gender focal points in some or all line ministries and other bodies to promote and monitor gender mainstreaming in departments and agencies working on agriculture, education, health, human rights, law, finance, security, justice, police, prisons, foreign affairs and trade. Bangladesh and Zimbabwe reported that the establishment of a gender focal point system facilitated gender mainstreaming in sectoral policies. The United States established offices for women and gender issues in numerous offices and departments, including the Food and Drug Administration, the Department of Labor, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense and the State Department and in the field of development assistance. The Women and Children Coordination Unit of Liberia established gender desk offices in 18 line ministries to coordinate efforts in planning and budgeting processes at the sectoral level.

40. There was also an increase in the number of special offices and focal points addressing women's and gender equality in municipal, district and provincial governments.[22] Viet Nam reported establishing gender focal points in 45 ministries or agencies in 61 of 64 provinces. Costa Rica created municipal commissions on the status of women and a national network of municipal women's offices. A website was set up in Austria to promote networking of officials at the federal, provincial and municipal administration levels.[23]

41. Several countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lithuania and Thailand, noted an increase in budget allocations for targeted initiatives for women and girls and gender equality. Thailand reported that budget allocations for gender training and development of tools and guidelines had increased.

42. Several countries[24] reported that limited financial resources were a prime obstacle to effective functioning of institutional mechanisms, which constrained their role in promoting, supporting and monitoring gender mainstreaming.

43. In a number of responses, including those from Ecuador, Kenya and the Palestinian Authority, it was noted that line ministries had no dedicated budgets for gender mainstreaming.

5. Monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms

44. While some countries reported on the wide variety of monitoring mechanisms developed, others indicated that lack of monitoring and accountability measures was an obstacle to effective implementation of gender mainstreaming.

45. The most commonly reported form of monitoring was the production of regular reports, often annually, a significant number of which were submitted to national legislatures. The Government of Japan submits an annual report describing progress towards a gender-equal society, action taken in the last year and proposals for the year to come. In Brazil, gender perspectives were integrated into sector policy evaluations of the Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management. The Department for Equal Opportunities in the Slovak Republic, set up in 1999, carries out annual evaluations of the National Action Plan for Women and the Concept of Equal Opportunities Between Women and Men, in collaboration with other line ministries. The Government of Fiji carried out a pilot project on gender auditing of Government policies to assess progress made in mainstreaming gender perspectives into the work of two ministries.

46. Some Member States set up institutions or committees to monitor progress. In 2000, Spain created a monitoring unit to build an information system capable of accurately reflecting the situation of women and the effect of policies to promote women's equality. Poland set up a permanent team of experts to monitor the national action plan. The team, which includes representatives from NGOs, established indicators for the implementation of the plan and prepared a monitoring report.

47. A few countries reported on assessment of the effectiveness of activities undertaken. The Swedish Government set up a commission of inquiry in February 2004 to evaluate the goals, direction, organization and effectiveness of the gender equality policy. In Kyrgyzstan, a gender audit of the activities of all structural subdivisions of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare was carried out in 2003. In the Netherlands, an independent external auditing committee was set up in 2004 to assess the effectiveness of the country's gender equality policy and the quality of results achieved. In Mexico, an analysis of progress in gender mainstreaming was carried out in 30 federal civil service bodies. As a result, Government agencies were classified in three categories: (a) advanced (encompassing 26.7 per cent of all bodies); (b) moderately advanced (40 per cent); and (c) starting the process (33.3 per cent).

48. Lack of or insufficient data disaggregated by sex and age was mentioned as an obstacle to monitoring progress in gender mainstreaming. Kenya noted that it is difficult to measure the level of implementation without established monitoring and evaluation systems, including sufficient information and data.

49. Some efforts have been made to develop accountability mechanisms for gender mainstreaming but little real progress was reported in this area. In Malta, accountability for gender mainstreaming is ensured through the performance management contract of senior officials in the public service and the performance management programme of other officers. In the Philippines, Government agencies are held accountable for the promotion of gender equality through the gender and development budget policy, which requires them to prepare annual gender and development plans and budgets together with their regular agency plans and budgets.

6. Role of national mechanisms

50. Several countries[25] noted the important role that national machineries play in promoting, supporting and monitoring gender mainstreaming in line ministries and other bodies at national level. The national policy framework on women's empowerment and gender equality of South Africa outlines the role of the national machinery and all other Government structures in advancing the national gender programme. The national focal point on women in Brunei Darussalam is responsible for undertaking and promoting research, providing training and a forum for exchange of ideas and discussion, creating awareness and coordinating projects.

51. An increasing number of countries, for example Armenia, Azerbaijan, Barbados, Chile, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Malta and Turkey, established inter-ministerial working groups or committees for gender mainstreaming to improve coordination. The Ministry of State of Turkey, under which the General Directorate on the Status of Women functions, established a communication network with all other related ministries to ensure that its policy proposals materialized into concrete proposals.

52. A number of countries indicated that they had established partnerships with NGOs and other bodies to work on gender mainstreaming. In Germany, the Gender Competence Centre at Humboldt University in Berlin provided advice and support to the federal ministries to implement the gender mainstreaming strategy. Bolivia, France and Uruguay established agreements and letters of intent among line ministries, local government, the private sector or NGOs. The Dutch expertise centre for gender and ethnicity at the e-quality knowledge centre supported gender mainstreaming with expertise, theme studies, instruments and the distribution of good practices.

53. Many countries[26] specifically mentioned NGO involvement in public policy formulation and national strategy development. NGOs have assisted the implementation of national plans in several countries, including in Bulgaria, Denmark, Cuba, China, El Salvador and the United Kingdom. NGOs have also promoted public awareness by establishing regional branches for outreach; assisting in gender training for experts and staff of Government and non-governmental entities; and providing advisory services.

54. In Bangladesh, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs worked closely with NGOs and women's organizations and included representatives of civil society in all its high-level policymaking committees. El Salvador's national policy on women called for coordination among official bodies, NGOs and civil society groups. From 2000 to 2004, the Government of Lithuania worked with NGOs in the implementation of gender-sensitive programmes with a view to facilitating progress in specific areas requiring inter-institutional cooperation, such as small and medium enterprises development, trafficking, prostitution, HIV/AIDS, drug control and prevention and domestic violence. The Samoa Association for Women Graduates hosted a conference of the Pacific Graduate Women's Network in September 2005, which focused on women's access to information and communication technology for their enhanced involvement and participation in politics.

55. Some Member States reported partnerships with parliamentarians. Some countries established formal legislative committees to review and propose legislation. Latvia established a special subcommittee to promote gender equality and gender mainstreaming legislation.

56. Several Member States reported on linkages with men's organizations and discussions on gender issues from the perspective of men. Barbados supported the men's educational support association and promoted discussion on the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS. Jordan enlisted male parliamentarians as partners in the debate over women's human rights.

III. Activities of entities of the United Nations system to support national level implementation of gender mainstreaming

57. Entities of the United Nations system supported national implementation of gender mainstreaming through projects, programmes and other activities. Several United Nations entities, including the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP),

provided assistance to Governments in their efforts to mainstream gender perspectives into national development frameworks, such as poverty reduction strategies, sector reforms and sector-wide approach initiatives. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) carried out a pilot project in the Syrian Arab Republic on gender mapping. The International Labour Office (ILO) conducted gender audits for its constituents for the first time in 2004.

58. Entities such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNFPA and WFP assisted countries in developing gender-sensitive policies and action plans, including on population and development, agriculture and rural development planning and food security. UNFPA supported Indonesia in reviewing and strengthening gender perspectives in its family law and development and population policy. WFP contributed to the integration of gender perspectives into the recent food security and nutrition assessment in Darfur. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations provided technical inputs to facilitate the incorporation of gender perspectives in the drafting of new constitutions and legislation and cooperated with national and international partners to integrate gender perspectives into electoral processes.

59. United Nations entities organized meetings, workshops and seminars to promote and develop capacity for gender mainstreaming at the national level. The twenty-third session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, organized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Nairobi from 21 to 25 February 2005, adopted a decision on gender mainstreaming in environmental policies and programmes.[27] The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Europe organized two regional symposiums in Bangkok (2002) and in Geneva (2004), which provided opportunities for Member States to exchange experiences and good practice examples in gender mainstreaming. In October 2005, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), in cooperation with the Government of Panama and the Inter-American Development Bank, organized one workshop and one seminar on intellectual property, gender and the protection of traditional cultural expressions and traditional knowledge in order to address the important role of indigenous women.

60. Several entities of the United Nations have disseminated findings of their research in different sector areas to support gender mainstreaming at the national level. UNEP reported on gender mainstreaming in environmental assessment and early warning. FAO has taken the lead in documenting the impact of HIV/AIDS on agriculture and agricultural workers, in particular women, and has provided policy advice to its Member States on how to mitigate the negative impacts on agriculture and food security.

61. Several entities, such as FAO, UNAIDS, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNFPA, UNIFEM and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, assisted Member States in the collection, effective use and dissemination of data and indicators disaggregated by sex. FAO assisted several Member States in the collection and retabulation of sex-disaggregated data to support informed planning and formulation of policies, programmes and projects in the agricultural sector and trained national

agricultural statisticians in the collection of such data. More than one third of UNDP country offices supported the collection of data disaggregated by sex, a major contribution to the development of a gender-responsive common country assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF) process, poverty reduction strategy papers, Millennium Development Goal reports and national human development reports.

62. The Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs worked on reviewing and updating the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*[28] in preparation for the 2010 Census World Programme, with a view to making the collection, production and dissemination of national census data more gender sensitive. Specific areas of attention included internal and international migration, education, families, employment, ethnicity, human functioning and disability and housing. The Statistics Division also prepared a publication entitled *Guide to Producing Statistics on Time Use: Measuring Paid and Unpaid Work*[29] for use by Member States, which includes a trial International Classification of Activities for Time-Use Statistics that is sensitive to the differences between women and men in remunerated and unremunerated work. UNIFEM supported efforts to build sustainable skills and commitments to develop and use sex-disaggregated databases in several countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Middle East.

63. UNFPA supported institutional capacity-building for gender mainstreaming in a number of countries in the Arab States region, such as Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Oman, Qatar, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan and Yemen. Activities included the development of gender strategies, gender audit and budget methodologies, mainstreaming gender in planning processes and reviewing legislation. ESCAP offered a gender-sensitive capacity-building programme on multimodal transport. FAO strengthened the capacity of more than 4,000 development specialists, in over 80 countries, to integrate socio-economic and gender issues in development policies, programmes and projects. UNAIDS, with the All China Women's Federation in Guangdong Province, supported the strengthening of the leadership of both the Party and the Government in addressing HIV/AIDS from a gender perspective.

64. The United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women disseminated information, tools and good practices on gender mainstreaming to Member States through its gender-mainstreaming database, which includes an extensive collection of resources on gender mainstreaming produced by different organizations, and sections on lessons learned and good practices. As an added feature, the database also contains a glossary of the terminology most commonly used in gender mainstreaming in order to facilitate conceptual clarity and common understanding.

65. As part of their strategies to promote gender mainstreaming at the national level, some entities carried out advocacy campaigns and established networks. In 2002, UNESCO facilitated the establishment of the regional gender in education network in Asia, in 15 countries, which aims to promote gender equality in education in terms of access, retention, performance and self-realization through developing gender responsive education policies and challenging societal gender stereotypes. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) carried out gender-sensitization campaigns with the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and

Maritime Transport; the Nautical Training School of Cape Verde; the Marine Training School of Malawi; and the Maritime Training College of Veracruz, Mexico. A regional sensitization seminar held in Samoa in 2004 resulted in the creation of the Pacific Women in Maritime Association (WIMA) in February 2005, which aims to promote active participation of women in the maritime sector of the Pacific Island countries.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

66. **An increasing number of Member States utilize gender mainstreaming and specific interventions to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. Policy frameworks for gender mainstreaming have improved at national level. Action plans, in some instances including time-bound goals and targets, are also in place in an increasing number of countries. Many countries, in further refining their policies on gender mainstreaming, have provided specific guidance on implementation. In addition to establishing general policies on gender mainstreaming, a number of countries have developed specific policies and action plans on mainstreaming gender perspectives into different sector areas. There has also been considerable development of methodologies, including for capacity-building, and tools, such as manuals and guidelines, to support implementation of these policies and action plans.**

67. **In addition, countries have made considerable efforts to incorporate gender perspectives into existing sector policies and strategies and programmes. Initiatives have been taken in a wide range of sector areas. Good practice examples were identified in relation to the items under consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fiftieth session.**

68. **Good practice examples were also provided on institutional development for gender mainstreaming. The development of action plans with concrete, measurable targets has proven particularly effective. Gender analysis of national budgets has also emerged as an important means of ensuring that resource allocations match policy commitments on gender mainstreaming.**

69. **Nevertheless, a significant gap between policy and practice, however, remains. Effective gender mainstreaming requires strong political commitment in the form of clear mandates, regular monitoring and enforcement of accountability mechanisms. Insufficient allocation of specific resources, both gender specialists and financial resources, for gender mainstreaming has hindered effective implementation.**

70. **Gaps which need to be addressed on a priority basis include inadequate understanding of the concept and lack of practical implementation strategies and skills. While the development of many innovative methodologies and tools can be seen as a positive development, they are not being utilized as systematically as required for effective implementation. Ensuring broader dissemination and more effective use of existing methodologies and tools must be a priority.**

71. **Critical challenges remain to the development of appropriate capacity-development programmes to ensure the systematic use of gender analysis and the establishment of monitoring and reporting procedures. Few countries**

reported on successful establishment of accountability mechanisms. Efforts to collect, compile and disseminate sex-disaggregated data for use in monitoring and reporting on gender mainstreaming should be strengthened.

72. **The catalytic role of national mechanisms for women, including ministries, gender equality commissions and committees and parliamentary bodies, in supporting gender mainstreaming should be strengthened. The mandates, resources, management support and access to decision-making of focal points in line ministries should be enhanced and coordination between line ministries increased. Interaction with gender specialists in other bodies at national level, such as NGOs, women's groups and networks and academia, and networking and sharing of good practice within and across regions, could support implementation of gender mainstreaming at national level.**

73. **The Commission on the Status of Women may wish to encourage Governments, with support of the United Nations system, civil society and other stakeholders to:**

(a) **Ensure that actions plans on gender mainstreaming include concrete goals, targets and indicators and clearly allocated responsibilities;**

(b) **Fully incorporate gender perspectives in budget processes;**

(c) **Ensure use of gender analysis and consultation with women in critical strategy development and reporting processes, including in relation to the Millennium Development Goals and poverty reduction strategies;**

(d) **Develop/strengthen and institutionalize the use of gender analysis, gender impact assessment and gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation procedures for all policy areas;**

(e) **Strengthen accountability systems for gender mainstreaming in all government bodies;**

(f) **Systematically document and disseminate lessons learned and good practice;**

(g) **Develop/strengthen the roles of national mechanisms, such as women's ministries, gender equality committees and commissions and parliaments in promoting, supporting and monitoring gender mainstreaming and increase collaboration with non-governmental organizations and civil society.**

74. **The Commission on the Status of Women may wish to enhance its catalytic role on gender mainstreaming at national level by requesting the Secretary-General, in a report on the follow-up to and progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session to the fifty-first session of the Commission, to provide an assessment of progress on gender mainstreaming, including information on key achievements, lessons learned and good practices, and to recommend further measures to enhance implementation, bearing in mind the thematic issue(s) under consideration by the Commission, as outlined in its multi-year programme of work.**

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2001, Supplement No. 1* (E/2001/99), resolution 2001/4, para. 4.

[2] See E/CN.6/2005/2, in the preparation of which, responses to the questionnaire on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000) were received from 140 countries.

[3] See DAW/2005/011. Responses were received from Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Honduras, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden, Tonga, Turkey and Uruguay.

[4] Inputs were received from the Population and Statistics Divisions of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, FAO, ILO, IMO, OCHA, OSSA, UNAIDS, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNRISD, UNRWA, WFP and WIPO.

[5] For example: Austria, Bolivia, Finland, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, Norway and Slovenia.

[6] For example: Andorra, Argentina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Gambia, Honduras, India, Israel, Kazakhstan, Lesotho, Luxembourg, Mozambique, Nigeria, Panama, Paraguay, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo, Tunisia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and the United Kingdom.

[7] For example: Austria, Belgium, Finland, Ireland and the United Kingdom.

[8] For example: Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Finland, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Jordan, Macedonia, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, Nepal, Norway, Peru and Zambia.

[9] See http://www.gem-set.org.

[10] For example: Argentina, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, Denmark, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Greece, Honduras, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Spain and Sweden.

[11] For example: Cuba, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Namibia, Nicaragua, Norway, New Zealand, Slovenia and the Syrian Arab Republic.

[12] For example: Belgium, Belize, Chile, Liechtenstein, Maldives, Kyrgyzstan and Oman.

[13] For example: Australia, Azerbaijan, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Botswana, Chile, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, Morocco, Namibia, new Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, Thailand, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam.

[14] For example: Algeria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Honduras, India, Ireland, Malta, Nepal, Nicaragua, Norway, the Palestinian Authority, Panama, Sweden, the Syrian Arab Republic, Viet Nam and the United Kingdom.

[15] For example: Canada, Finland, India, Italy, Mexico, Norway, New Zealand and Slovenia.

[16] For example: Colombia, Jordan, Kenya, Latvia, Malawi, Switzerland and Uganda.

[17] For example: the Central African Republic, Kenya, Maldives and Qatar.

[18] For example: Austria, Barbados, Belize, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Estonia, Greece, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Nepal, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Portugal, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Uganda and Viet Nam.

[19] For example: Belgium, Estonia, Germany, Japan, Nepal, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom.

[20] For example: Austria, Belgium, Belize, Ethiopia, Germany, Malawi, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, Suriname, Sweden and Switzerland.

[21] For example: Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Finland, Guinea, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Latvia, Liberia, Malawi, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Norway, Seychelles, Suriname, Sweden, the Syrian Arab Republic, Panama, the Philippines, the United Republic of Tanzania, Thailand, Ukraine, United States, Uruguay, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

[22] For example: Argentina, Austria, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Luxembourg, Paraguay and Sweden.

[23] See http://www.imag-gendermainstreaming.at.

[24] For example: Belize, the Central African Republic, Djibouti, Dominica, Egypt, Honduras, Kenya, Malawi, Maldives, Nepal, Peru and Suriname.

[25] For example: Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Guatemala, New Zealand, Norway, the Palestinian Authority, Singapore, Seychelles, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the United Republic of Tanzania.

[26] For example: Bangladesh, Canada, Denmark, Jordan and Kyrgyzstan.

[27] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixtieth Session, Supplement No. 25* (A/60/25), annex.

[28] *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.8).

[29] *Guide to Producing Statistics on Time Use: Measuring Paid and Unpaid Work* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.04.XVII.7).

United Nations E/CN.6/2006/3

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
22 December 2005

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fiftieth session
27 February-10 March 2006
Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern

Proposals for a multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women**

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 60/140, provides proposals for enhancing the methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women through the development of the multi-year programme of work for the period 2007-2009. The proposals are based on the work of the Commission since 1996, the outcome of the 10-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the 2005 World Summit as well as the experience of other functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

** The submission of the present report was delayed owing to the need for consultation, including with the Bureau of the Commission on the Status of Women.

05-65910 (E) 130106

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 1987/24, the Economic and Social Council adopted the first long-term programme of work for the Commission on the Status of Women and endorsed the priority themes for five sessions of the Commission. On the basis of the first review of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, the Council adopted in its resolution 1990/15 the priority themes of the Commission for the period 1993-1996. Following the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995,[1] and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/203, the Council adopted in its resolution 1996/6 a multi-year programme of work for the Commission covering the period 1997-2000 with a more focused and thematic approach, taking up a cluster of the critical areas of concern from the Beijing Platform for Action at each of its sessions.

2. At its forty-fourth session, the Commission proposed themes for 2001 to bridge the gap until the development of a new multi-year programme of work. At its forty-sixth session in 2001, the Commission developed a multi-year programme of work for the period 2002-2006. The work programme contained in Council resolution 2001/4 provided a framework to assess progress in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the special session of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly[2] through action-oriented initiatives and outcomes.

3. The present report is prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/140, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Commission with recommendations for enhancing the Commission's work as well as proposals for future themes.

II. Background

4. The 10-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was carried out during the forty-ninth session of the Commission in March 2005. The review indicated that while there were achievements in the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action in all regions, obstacles and challenges were also reported in every area. The review noted the large gap in implementation of existing policy recommendations that needed to be explicitly addressed. The Declaration adopted by the Commission welcomed the progress made thus far towards achieving gender equality, stressed that challenges and obstacles remain in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and, in this regard, pledged to undertake further action to ensure their full and accelerated implementation (see Council decision 2005/232).

5. In the 2005 World Summit Outcome,[3] the Heads of State and Government reaffirmed that the full and effective implementation of the goals and objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly was an essential contribution to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The World Summit identified actions that would be needed in order to eliminate pervasive gender discrimination, such as: (a) eliminating gender inequalities in primary and secondary education by the

earliest possible date and at all educational levels by 2015; (b) guaranteeing the free and equal rights of women to own and inherit property and ensuring secure tenure of property and housing by women; (c) ensuring equal access to reproductive health; (d) promoting women's equal access to labour markets, sustainable employment and adequate labour protection; (e) ensuring equal access of women to productive assets and resources, including land, credit and technology; (f) eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and the girl child, including by ending impunity and by ensuring the protection of civilians, in particular women and the girl child, during and after armed conflicts in accordance with obligations of States under international humanitarian law and international human rights laws; and (g) promoting increased representation of women in Government decision-making bodies, including through ensuring their equal opportunity to participate fully in the political process.

6. The Heads of State and Government also recognized the importance of gender mainstreaming as a tool for achieving gender equality and undertook to actively promote the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres. The review of the working methods of the Commission and development of the multi-year programme of work should emphasize the catalytic role of the Commission in promoting gender mainstreaming.

7. The Heads of State and Government called upon the Economic and Social Council to ensure follow-up of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the internationally agreed development goals, and to hold annual ministerial level substantive reviews to assess progress, drawing on its functional and regional commissions and other international institutions, in accordance with their respective mandates. In this context, the Commission should strengthen its focus on sharing of experience, good practice and lessons learned to enhance implementation at national level and to contribute to the work of the Council.

8. In its resolution 57/270 B, the General Assembly requested each functional commission to examine its working methods in order to better pursue the implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits and report to the Council on the outcomes, no later than 2005. At its forty-eighth session, the Commission adopted decision 48/101 containing proposals aimed at improving its working methods through, inter alia, enhancing the use at its annual sessions of interactive events that would increase the emphasis of the Commission on implementation and exploring ways to make better use of its standing agenda item on emerging issues, trends and approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men. In its decision 49/101, the Commission agreed to continue discussing its working methods at its fiftieth session in 2006.

9. In its resolution 2005/48, the Council welcomed the progress made in the review of the working methods of several functional commissions, and invited those functional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies that had not yet done so to continue to examine their methods of work, as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/270 B, in order better to pursue the implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits, and to submit their reports to the Council in 2006.

III. Preparation of the multi-year programme of work for the Commission from 2007

10. To facilitate the process of development of the multi-year programme of work for the Commission on the Status of Women from 2007, the Division for the Advancement of Women organized an expert consultation with representatives of regional networks, from 31 October to 3 November 2005, in New York. The expert consultation aimed to identify priority issues in the follow-up to the 10-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In conjunction with this expert consultation, the Division also organized an interactive panel on the priority issues identified by the regional networks, with participation of Member States, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations. Informal meetings were also held with the United Nations Inter-agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and with representatives of non-governmental organizations to further identify priority issues for the multi-year programme of work as part of the preparation of the present report.

11. The sources used to prepare the proposed multi-year programme of work include the report of the Secretary-General on the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (E/CN.6/2005/2 and Corr.1) as well as the agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission since 1996. The proposals for the multi-year programme take into account ongoing discussions on the working methods of the Commission.

12. In its resolution 2001/27, the Council encouraged the functional commissions to increase their coordination and collaboration at the planning and formulation stage of their work programmes and to take into consideration the work of other commissions in choosing annual themes for discussion. In preparing the proposed multi-year programme of work the current and planned work programmes and methods of work of other functional commissions of the Council were taken into account.

IV. Proposals for the multi-year programme of work for 2007-2009

13. In accordance with Commission decision 48/101 to enhance the use at its annual sessions of interactive events that would increase the emphasis on implementation, and building on the positive experience of use of interactive expert panels since 1996, in particular during the 10-year review and appraisal in 2005, the multi-year programme of work proposed has a strong focus on interactive expert panels and multi-stakeholder dialogues. To ensure the effective implementation of this approach, Member States should be encouraged to ensure participation of technical experts, including from ministries with expertise relevant to the substantive themes under consideration, on delegations to the Commission. The participation of statisticians to contribute to the discussion on improving monitoring and reporting on implementation is also desirable.

14. The main consideration in the selection of expert panellists and keynote speakers for the interactive activities during the Commission would be expertise in

the topic and the capacity to present relevant issues in a thought-provoking and innovative manner. The interactive panels and dialogues would ensure participation of leading experts on the substantive issues and a more dynamic and focused debate on key policy and implementation aspects, based on the exchange of ideas between different stakeholders.

15. To ensure an interactive and free-flowing discussion of experiences, lessons learned and good practices during the interactive events, experienced moderators with expertise on the themes covered should be used in the expert panels and dialogues. Moderators would be expected to make introductory remarks setting the framework for the discussion, to proactively guide the discussion and to provide a summary of key points at the end of the discussion.

16. In its resolution 2001/27 the Council encouraged its functional commissions, within existing resources, to share more systematically the outcome of their work, including through communications among chairpersons or through briefings by the Secretariat. In the context of its multi-year programme of work for the period 2002-2006, the Commission systematically transmitted its agreed conclusions to major United Nations conferences and summits such as the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society,[4] the World Summit on Sustainable Development[5] and the Second World Assembly on Ageing.[6] The Commission would enhance this practice during the multi-year programme of work for the period 2007-2009.

17. To ensure attention to regional priorities and experiences, the Commission should invite regional commissions to consider holding regional meetings and activities, as necessary and appropriate, in a timely manner, to contribute to the work of the Commission for both policy development and review of implementation, in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and, as appropriate, with other regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations and bodies and the regional offices of funds and programmes.

A. Development of a fixed programme of substantive themes

18. It is proposed that the Commission continues its practice of developing a fixed multi-year programme of substantive themes. This would allow the Commission to carry out in-depth reviews of progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action and other issues identified in the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, as well as to provide substantive input to critical intergovernmental processes and their follow-up, such as major United Nations conferences and summits.

19. **One theme should be selected per year, with a sustained focus over two sessions.[7] In order to strengthen the connection between policy recommendations and implementation, the first session would be devoted to policy development and the second session (two years later) would focus on a review of the implementation of the agreed conclusions adopted after consideration of the theme in the first session. The cycle of policy development followed by a review after two years would allow the Commission to enhance its follow-up on the implementation of its agreed conclusions more systematically and effectively.**

20. **The proposed multi-year programme of work on substantive themes covers the period 2007-2009. In 2007 the Commission would undertake policy development on a substantive theme with the view to reviewing implementation after two years, in 2009. By 2009, the Commission would have gone through one full cycle of policy development followed by review of implementation after a two-year period. The adoption of a three-year cycle would allow the Commission to review the functioning of its two-year policy and review cycle in order to ensure that this approach enhances the effective functioning of the Commission and positive outcomes at the national level.**

1. Policy development session

21. The policy development session would be initiated by a high-level round table established pursuant to Commission decision 46/101 to facilitate an exchange between high-level representatives, including ministers of women's affairs, representatives of women's/gender equality commissions and heads of national machineries and other mechanisms for the advancement of women, on achievements, gaps and challenges in institutional development in relation to the substantive theme under consideration. The format of the high-level round table should be a free-flowing exchange of views with a focus on experiences, lessons learned and good practice. A discussion note containing a series of questions would guide the dialogue.

22. An interactive expert panel on key policy aspects of the substantive theme would further the discussion. Experts from Member States, the United Nations system and the expert group meeting organized on the theme prior to the Commission's session would introduce the discussion. All stakeholders, including Member States, entities of the United Nations system and representatives of non-governmental organizations, would participate in the discussion.

23. Taking into account the catalytic role of the Commission in promoting gender mainstreaming, an interactive dialogue on capacity-building on gender mainstreaming in relation to the substantive theme would be organized. The dialogue would involve an exchange of experiences, lessons learned and good practice among technical experts, including from Member States, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations. Statisticians would also be invited to participate and provide inputs on increasing the effectiveness of monitoring and reporting on implementation of the theme under consideration.

24. The outcome of the debate on the substantive theme during the policy development session would take the form of agreed conclusions. These would be disseminated widely to relevant intergovernmental bodies and mechanisms and entities of the United Nations.

2. Review session

25. The review session on the substantive theme, held two years after the adoption of the agreed conclusions, would assess progress in the implementation of the recommendations in the agreed conclusions.

26. The review would be initiated with an interactive expert panel, comprising representatives of Member States, United Nations entities and non-governmental

organizations. The expert panel would focus on achievements as well as gaps and challenges in implementation.

27. A dialogue among Member States on ways to build on identified good practices and to address the gaps and challenges in implementation, including those identified in the interactive expert panel, would be initiated by keynote speakers. One keynote speaker would specifically address the statistical aspects of improving monitoring and reporting on implementation.

28. The outcome of the review session would be a chairperson's summary, highlighting the main conclusions and findings from the two interactive activities. These would be disseminated widely to relevant intergovernmental bodies, and other mechanisms and entities of the United Nations.

3. Proposal for substantive themes for the period 2007-2009

29. **Based on the outcome of the 10-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 2005 World Summit and the work of the Commission since 1996, the following multi-year programme of substantive themes for the period 2007-2009 is proposed (see the annex to the present document for rationales for the proposed themes).**

2007 (review 2009)
Elimination of discrimination against the girl child

2008 (review 2010)
Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women

2009 (review 2011)
Sharing of responsibilities for home and family, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS

30. **Since the Commission would undertake the review of the agreed conclusions on the substantive themes covered in this multi-year programme of work first in 2009, it is proposed that during 2007 and 2008 the Commission follow-up on the implementation of agreed conclusions adopted during its 2002-2006 multi-year programme of work. During 2007, it is proposed that the Commission review agreed conclusions on women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peacebuilding,[8] adopted during its forty-eighth session. In 2008, the Commission would review the agreed conclusions on equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels, to be adopted during its fiftieth session.**

B. Emerging issues

31. In accordance with Council resolution 1996/6, the Commission should identify emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men that require urgent consideration and make substantive recommendations thereon. In its decision 48/101, the Commission agreed to explore ways to make better use of its standing agenda on emerging issues, trends and approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men.

32. **It is proposed that the Bureau of the Commission identify an emerging issue to be considered by the Commission prior to each session, taking into consideration critical developments at global and regional levels, as well as planned activities within the United Nations, for example in intergovernmental contexts, where increased attention to gender perspectives is required.**

33. The consideration of the emerging issue would take the form of an interactive expert panel, comprising representatives of Member States, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations. It would focus on achievements, gaps and challenges through an exchange of experiences, lessons learned and good practices.

34. The outcome of the consideration of emerging issues would take the form of a chairperson's summary. The outcome would be broadly disseminated to relevant intergovernmental bodies and mechanisms and entities of the United Nations system.

Notes

[1] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-5 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[2] General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex.

[3] General Assembly resolution 60/1.

[4] Agreed conclusions on participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women (*Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2003, Supplement No. 7* (E/2003/27), chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution III).

[5] Agreed conclusions on environmental management and the mitigation of natural disasters (*Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 7* (E/2002/27), chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution III.B).

[6] Agreed conclusions on eradicating poverty, including through the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle, in a globalizing world (*Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 7* (E/2002/27), chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution III.A).

[7] This builds on the experience of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which implemented a two-year cycle for its 2004 and 2005 sessions, and the plans of the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on Population and Development to introduce a two-year cycle from 2007.

[8] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2004, Supplement No. 7* (E/2004/27), chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution IV.

Annex

Proposal for substantive themes for the period 2007-2009

2007 (review 2009)
Elimination of discrimination against the girl child

1. The Beijing Platform for Action called for comprehensive policy, programmes and legislative measures to, inter alia, promote the rights of the girl child, eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls, eradicate violence against the girl child and eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training.[a] The outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly[b] identified child labour, violence, lack of access to education, and sexual abuse as some of the obstacles that the girl child continued to face.

2. In its 1998 agreed conclusions,[c] the Commission on the Status of Women outlined actions and initiatives aimed at, inter alia, the promotion and protection of the human rights of the girl child; education and empowerment of the girl child; health needs of girls and the situation of girls in armed conflict and trafficking. In the 2005 World Summit Outcome,[d] the Heads of State and Government resolved to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and the girl child, including by ending impunity and by ensuring the protection of civilians, in particular women and the girl child, during and after armed conflicts, in accordance with the obligations of States under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. In its resolution 1325 (2000), the Security Council highlighted the impact of conflict on girls, particularly in relation to sexual exploitation.

3. The 10-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action[e] revealed that countries had taken initiatives to address the rights and special needs of the girl child through, inter alia, legislation and development of national actions plans to incorporate the rights and special needs of the girl child. However, obstacles and challenges still remain.

4. In its resolution 60/141, the General Assembly expressed deep concern about discrimination against the girl child and the violation of their rights, including in situations of poverty, war and armed conflict. All States were urged to take all necessary measures and to institute legal reforms to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by the girl child of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and to take effective action against violations of those rights and freedoms.

5. The interactive events during the Commission would focus the broad range of actions and initiatives needed to eliminate discrimination against the girl child. By focusing on this topic, the Commission would address the critical areas of concern on human rights of women, women and health, women and armed conflict, violence against women and education and training of women. Consideration of the theme would allow the Commission to contribute to the follow-up of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children in 2007 and to follow up on the in-depth study on violence against children to be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

2008 (review 2010)
Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women

6. In its discussion of the resources required for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, the Beijing Platform for Action emphasized that funding had to be identified and mobilized from all sources and across all sectors.[f] The Platform for Action also emphasized that full and effective implementation would require the integration of a gender perspective in budgetary decisions on policies and programmes, as well as the adequate financing of specific programmes for securing equality between women and men. At its twenty-third special session, the General Assembly noted that the realization and achievement of the goals of gender equality, development and peace need to be supported by the allocation of necessary human, financial and material resources for specific and targeted activities at the local, national, regional and international levels as well as by enhanced and increased international cooperation.[g] Governments were also called on to incorporate a gender perspective into the design, development, adoption and execution of all budgetary processes, as appropriate, in order to promote equitable, effective and appropriate resource allocation and establish adequate budgetary allocations to support gender equality and development programmes that enhance women's empowerment and develop the necessary analytical and methodological tools and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.[h] The 10-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action indicated the importance of resource allocations at different levels for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women (E/CN.6/2005/2). The review also emphasized that data disaggregated by sex was critical to gender-sensitive budget allocation and planning and was important to the full implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

7. In its Monterrey Consensus,[i] the International Conference on Financing for Development highlighted the importance of a holistic approach to financing for development, including gender-sensitive development and encouraged the mainstreaming of the gender perspective into development policies at all levels and in all sectors. The Conference also stressed that it was critical to reinforce national efforts in capacity-building in developing countries and countries with economies in transition on gender budget policies. Countries increasingly use gender analysis of national budgets to ensure that the allocation of resources match policy commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

8. The interactive events during the Commission could review existing mechanisms for financing gender equality and the empowerment of women, including gender-sensitive budget processes, at the national, regional and global levels, identify good practices and recommend future action. In considering this topic, the Commission would follow up on the implementation of the critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action on women and the economy, women and poverty and institutional mechanisms for advancement of women, as well as the chapters on institutional and financial arrangements. The Commission would also have the opportunity to provide substantive input to the International Conference on Financing for Development to review implementation of the Monterrey Consensus in 2008 or 2009.

2009 (review 2011)
Sharing of responsibilities for home and family, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS

9. In the Beijing Platform for Action the issue of unequal division of labour and responsibilities were addressed within the context of the critical areas of concern on women and poverty, education and training, women and health, women and the economy and women in power and decision-making. The Platform notes that a more equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men not only provides a better quality of life for women and their daughters but also enhances their opportunities to shape and design public policy, practice and expenditure so that their interests may be recognized and addressed. At its twenty-third special session,[b] the General Assembly emphasized that the changing context of gender relations, as well as the discussion on gender equality, has led to an increased reassessment of gender roles. This had further encouraged discussion of the roles and responsibilities of women and men working together towards gender equality and the need for changing those stereotypical and traditional roles that limit women's full potential.

10. At the same session, the General Assembly noted that there was a need for balanced participation between women and men in remunerated and unremunerated work. Failure to recognize and measure in quantitative terms unremunerated work of women, which was often not valued in national accounts, had meant that women's full contribution to social and economic development remained underestimated and undervalued. As long as there was insufficient sharing of tasks and responsibilities with men, the combination of remunerated work and caregiving would lead to the continued disproportionate burden for women in comparison to men. In its 2004 agreed conclusions,[j] the Commission recognized that joint partnership between women and girls and men and boys was essential to achieving gender equality and called for the creation and improvement of training and education programmes to enhance awareness and knowledge among men and women on their roles as parents, legal guardians and caregivers and the importance of sharing family responsibilities.

11. In this context, there is recognition that the responsibilities for care of people living with HIV/AIDS and for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS fall disproportionately on women. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) reports that millions of households are devastated by the epidemic, with the most significant impact on women and children.[k] Girls drop out of school to care for sick parents or for younger siblings. Older women often take on the burden of caring for ailing adult children and later, when they die, adopt the parental role for the orphaned children. They are often also responsible for producing an income or food crops. Older women caring for orphans and sick children may be isolated socially because of AIDS-related stigma and discrimination. Stigma also means that family support is not a certainty when women become HIV-positive; they may be rejected and have their property seized when their husband dies.[l]

12. The interactive events during the Commission would focus on actions required to ensure balanced participation of women and men in home and family responsibilities, including in relation to caring roles in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. By focusing on this theme, the Commission would address the critical areas of concern on the women and the economy, women and poverty, women in power and decision-making and women and health. Consideration of the theme would also provide an opportunity to address the situation of older women and

widows in the context of HIV/AIDS. It would allow the Commission to follow up on the implementation on its agreed conclusions on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality adopted at its forty-eighth session[m] and on women, the girl child and human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome adopted at its forty-fifth session.[n] The Commission could also contribute to the follow-up of the Comprehensive Review of progress achieved in realizing the targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS,[o] from 31 May to 1 June 2006, and the high-level meeting on 2 June 2006, as well as the work of the UNAIDS Global Coalition on Women and AIDS.

Notes

[a] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[b] General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex.

[c] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 27* and corrigendum (E/1998/27 and Corr.1), chap. I, sect. B, draft resolution IV, sect. IV.

[d] General Assembly resolution 60/1.

[e] E/CN.6/2005/2, paras. 466 and 470.

[f] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[g] General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex, para. 65.

[h] Ibid., para. 73 (b).

[i] *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[j] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2004, Supplement No. 7* (E/2004/27), chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution IV.

[k] *UNAIDS: An Exceptional Response to AIDS*.

[l] UNAIDS 2004 Report on the global AIDS epidemic.

[m] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2004, Supplement No. 7* (E/2004/27), chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution III.

[n] Ibid., *2001, Supplement No. 27* and corrigendum (E/2001/27 and Corr.1), chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution IV, sect. A.

[o] General Assembly resolution S-26/2.

United Nations E/CN.6/2006/4

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
7 December 2005

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fiftieth session
27 February-10 March 2006
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report summarizes the situation of Palestinian women between October 2004 and September 2005, in reference to Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/43 of 26 July 2005. It reviews the situation of women and provides an overview of the assistance provided to Palestinian women by entities of the United Nations system, inter alia with regard to economic activities, humanitarian assistance, education and training, health, and the human rights of women. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

** The submission of the present report was delayed due to the need for consultation with relevant departments.

05-63226 (E) 060106

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2005/43, the Economic and Social Council, concerned about the grave deterioration of the situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fiftieth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from October 2004 to September 2005. The first part of the report reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from United Nations bodies or individuals that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Such bodies and individuals include the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967, and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

3. The second part of the report reflects information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Public Information, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), ESCWA, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) and the World Bank.

4. The report also provides recommendations aimed at improving the situation of Palestinian women, including through the continued assistance of the United Nations system.

II. Situation of Palestinian women

5. Despite a period of relative calm from February to August 2005 which marked the evacuation of Israeli settlers from the Gaza strip,[1] the majority of Palestinian women and children continued to suffer the consequences of the conflict and restrictions of access (E/ICEF/2005/P/L.29, para. 34). Poverty and unemployment persist in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (E/CN.4/2005/29, para. 8) and human rights violations in the form of violence against women are pervasive (E/CN.4/2005/72/Add.4, p. 2). An increasing number of families have exhausted the means that enabled them to cope with the crisis over the past five years and face difficulties in meeting their basic needs. This negative trend is a major source of stress and anxiety for a population already weakened by years of violence, isolation, movement restrictions and severe economic decline. As a result, women and their families suffer chronic insecurity.[2]

6. The *Palestine Human Development Report 2004*[3] emphasized that development was not possible without women's participation. It highlighted the growing concern about the existing gap between women and men in terms of opportunities, choices and living conditions.[4] The report highlighted the limited participation of women in the official development process, the job market and in decision-making processes in public institutions.[5] The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences attributed the increasing inequality of women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to a double system of subordination, that is occupation and patriarchy, which was sustained through multiple forms of direct and indirect violence inside and outside the home (E/CN.4/2005/72/Add.4, para. 47).

7. The Special Rapporteur reported that women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are killed or threatened with death for tarnishing family honour. Women's transgressions of socially expected behaviours, derived from prevailing patriarchal norms and standards, are believed to violate the "honour" of men and the family and legitimize violence against women as a disciplinary measure to maintain or restore family honour. Women accused of promiscuity may be imprisoned in their homes, subjected to verbal and physical violence, married to their violator or even murdered in the name of honour (Ibid., para. 56).

8. The patriarchal biases prevailing in the legal provisions and criminal justice system prevent women from accessing justice and escaping violence (Ibid., para. 60). The Personal Status laws that regulate women's rights and roles within the family in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are not unified. For example, Muslim women in the West Bank are subject to Jordanian law; those in the Gaza are subject to Egyptian law; and Christian Palestinians are subject to laws established by their respective churches (Ibid., para. 60 (a)).

9. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences welcomed the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 2003 and reported that it was addressing violence against women as a cross-cutting issue in all of its programmes (Ibid., para. 62). The Ministry of Women's Affairs worked with the Ministry of the Interior to train police on women's rights and to create police stations that facilitate women's access. The Special Rapporteur noted that the Ministry has the potential to improve the situation of Palestinian women and promote and protect women's rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory if it

receives the necessary resources and support (Ibid., para. 63). Non-governmental organizations conducted community educational workshops in accordance with international standards on women's rights and monitored the criminal justice system's response to victims of violence (Ibid., para. 67).

10. The Special Rapporteur noted that the occupation permeated all aspects of life and entailed violations of economic, social and cultural rights (Ibid., para. 13) and reported a noticeable regression in terms of women's rights and fundamental freedoms (Ibid., para. 66). The death, imprisonment or unemployment of many adult male members of the community, which affected all areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, increased poverty and social tensions that contribute to increased domestic violence (Ibid., para. 48).

11. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967 reported that the occupation and the wall violated women's rights (A/60/271, para. 43). Palestinian women were routinely harassed, intimidated and abused at checkpoints and gates and were humiliated in front of their families and subjected to sexual violence by soldiers and settlers (Ibid.).

12. The Special Rapporteur also reported that approximately 120 Palestinian women were in prison, 11 of whom were in administrative detention — that is, being held without charge or trial. A total of 22 of the female prisoners were married and 18 were mothers (Ibid., p. 42).[6] Women prisoners were subjected to gender-based violence while under investigation and detention (A/60/271, para. 43). The conditions in prisons raised concerns about women's health and well-being (Ibid.).

13. The Special Rapporteur on adequate housing emphasized on several occasions the disproportionate effects of house demolitions on women, children and the elderly (E/CN.4/2005/72/Add.4, para. 28). House demolitions and the destruction of natural resources increased the economic and psychological burden on Palestinian women, who remained primarily responsible for running households and caring for family members.[7] Extra hours spent at checkpoints added to the time burden faced by women.[8]

14. Restriction of movement through closures continued to play a defining role in the lives of most Palestinians.[9] Drawing on the 2005 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics survey, ILO reported that 52.5 per cent of households cited the closure measures, 53.6 per cent cited military checkpoints and 16 per cent of households cited the wall as obstacles to accessing health services.[10] Some women had been forced to give birth at checkpoints after having been denied passage or while waiting to pass, which had led to maternal and infant deaths; others had not been able to reach medical facilities for pre- and post-natal care.[11] Information provided by UNRWA revealed that 15 pregnant women in 2004 and 8 in 2005 had experienced delays of 1 to 2.5 hours while being transported to hospital by ambulance (A/60/324, para. 6). The problem was more acute in rural areas, especially for women who lived in villages cut off by checkpoints from the cities where the hospitals were located (Ibid., para. 11).

15. At its thirty-third session in July 2005, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women reviewed the third periodic report of Israel (CEDAW/C/ISR/3) and expressed concern about the number of incidents at Israeli checkpoints which had had a negative impact on the rights of Palestinian women,

including the right of access to health-care services for pregnant women. The Committee called upon Israel to ensure that the authorities at all checkpoints were instructed to ensure access to health care for pregnant women, while protecting the security of Israel (A/60/38, paras. 257-258).

16. UNWRA reported that the social, economic and cultural context of women's health remained challenging during the period under review, as the Palestine refugee population had one of the highest birth rates in the region. The *Palestine Human Development Report* expressed concern about the high fertility rates in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which were attributed to social custom and tradition, both of which encouraged large families and early marriage for girls.[12] The report observed that fertility rates in the Palestinian territories were among the highest in the world.[13] Approximately one third of Palestine refugee women marry before the age of 18, and an equal proportion of women of reproductive age suffer from iron deficiency anaemia. The preliminary results of a study conducted by UNRWA revealed that over 36 per cent of pregnant women and over 43 per cent of nursing mothers in the Gaza Strip were anaemic (A/60/65-E/2005/13, para. 53). ESCWA reported that food insecurity had adversely affected women's health (Ibid., para. 53). A home visit programme conducted by the Ministry of Health found that the nutritional health status of women and children was affected by internal closure measures.[14]

17. UNICEF reported that although the overall health service coverage had been stable, the utilization and quality of maternal and child health services continued to be jeopardized. While 98 per cent of births were attended by skilled health staff and 96 per cent of pregnant women benefited from antenatal care, prematurity and low birth weight, related to the health and nutritional status of the mother and the quality of maternal and newborn health services, accounted for 41 per cent of infant deaths. That percentage was close to 46 per cent in the Gaza Strip.[15]

18. UNICEF also reported that preventive and curative maternal and child health services and health promotion activities were disrupted by the current conflict, resulting in decreased essential care for women and children. Only 42 per cent of mothers who delivered in hospitals over the past five years had received health education on key maternal and infant health topics, such as breastfeeding, maternal nutrition and family planning. Neonatal mortality played a role in the stagnation or aggravation of the infant and under-five mortality rates among Palestinian children.

19. Women's access to decision-making remained limited.[16] The *Palestine Human Development Report* revealed that female representation in ministries, parties and community organizations was still very limited. An indication of the low levels of political participation of Palestinian women was demonstrated by the decreasing number of women in executive, legislative and local institutions. Female representation on the Palestinian National Council did not exceed 8 per cent, while the Legislative Council had only 5 women members out of a total of 88. Within the executive authority, the Cabinet included only 2 women ministers, while women represented only 12.5 per cent of the 250 directors general appointed in various ministries. In municipal and local councils, the percentage of women had never exceeded 1 per cent until the elections held in late 2004, when it rose to 17 per cent.[17]

20. For the first time in 28 years, positive developments were, however, noted in the first round of multiparty local elections held in December 2004 and January

2005. There was a record participation of women, both as candidates and as voters. As a result of legislation establishing quotas, there should be at least two women in each council.[18] According to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, women's groups had called for quotas for women candidates in the elections — 30 per cent for local council elections and 20 per cent for the legislative council. ILO reported that there had been some debate around women's candidatures. However, a number of Palestinian organizations, in addition to the Ministry of Women's Affairs, have supported the idea.[19]

21. Poverty remained widespread in the occupied territories.[20] Approximately 11 per cent of all Palestinian families living below the poverty line in Palestine were headed by women, and the overall percentage of poor families headed by women was greater than that of poor families headed by men.[21] The *Palestine Human Development Report* observed that there was a close relationship between female poverty in Palestinian society and the nature of the male-dominated job market. Horizontal and vertical segregation between women and men had a negative effect on women, especially those living below the poverty line.[22]

22. The participation of women in the labour force remained low.[23] In the third quarter of 2004, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics labour force survey reported the unemployment rate as 27.4 per cent for men and 23.1 per cent for women. ILO noted that the working patterns of women and men were highly differentiated in the occupied territories. More women than men were studying. However, only 1 woman in 10 of working age was employed.[24] With regard to wages, the hourly wages of women were above those of men in agriculture and in services but below those of men in manufacturing and in commerce, hotels and restaurants.[25]

23. ILO reported that one in three young persons aged 15-24 and over half of those aged 25-29 were in forced idleness, which reinforced the exceptional circumstances prevailing in the occupied territories.[26] ILO stated that the situation required urgent attention in the form of significant assistance in vocational training, business development and employment orientation specifically directed at young women and men. Young women and men also faced numerous constraints in mobility within the territories and in accessing employment in Israel or in the industrial estates.[27]

24. The proportion of women in part-time work was significantly higher than that of men: 40 per cent for women compared to 17 per cent for men. ILO noted that this might be a factor in the very moderate real wage increases registered in 2004 and might also explain why 27 per cent of workers earned less than the average wage and less than the minimum wage.[28] A number of work permits for business people had been issued, although utilization had been low. The photographic control of women and men workers at checkpoints through the use of customized screening machines was perceived by Palestinians as an example of indecent working conditions, a health hazard and a humiliation.[29]

25. For the period under review, the Ministry of Women's Affairs took measures to further the political, economic and social empowerment of women.[30] It established good working relations with other ministries and collaborated on gender mainstreaming initiatives. Efforts were made, for example, to mainstream gender perspectives in the social security policy, with the assistance of ILO. Examples of good practices were also disseminated in order to develop a gender-responsive budgeting process.[31]

III. Assistance to Palestinian women

Economic activities

26. The World Bank reported on an improved targeting scheme of the Social Safety Net Reform Project, which would enable poor adult women living on their own because of separation, divorce or widowhood to receive cash assistance from the special hardship case programme.

27. IFAD reported on phases I and II of its rehabilitation and development programme. IFAD mobilized $10 million towards phase II, aimed at restoring access to essential services and social and physical infrastructure in Gaza and the West Bank and providing immediate income through the provision of employment in infrastructure rehabilitation and expansion; and promoting opportunities for the target group to access resources needed to improve their income-earning opportunities. Specific initiatives targeting poor rural women were included in the programme, such as two community centres (in Azzoun and Jayyous villages), under the savings and credit associations which serve the financial and social needs of women in the area. The community centre for the Women's Rural Development Society was opened to provide training courses to meet the financial needs of women. In addition, a rural credit component, implemented in cooperation with the Arab Bank, continued to provide direct financing to rural women to set up and/or expand their small income-generation activities. Since the beginning of the project, a total of 340 women's income-generating activity loans were made, amounting to $950,300. The repayment rate for women's loans was reported by the Arab Bank as 96 per cent, as of 31 March 2005.

28. UNRWA continued its microcredit community support programme to promote the socio-economic status and self-reliance of the most vulnerable among the refugees, including women. The microcredit community support programme issued more than $1.87 million in loans to a mix of low-income families and small entrepreneurs, including women. Furthermore, UNRWA reported granting 4,719 loans valued at $2.93 million to women through its microfinance and micro-entrepreneurship programme.

29. UN-Habitat introduced a housing and income-generating programme for widows and underprivileged women in Hebron, with an initial funding of $6.2 million. The objectives of the project are to foster self-reliance by facilitating the transition from welfare to gainful employment, promoting the local economy and contributing to poverty alleviation through job creation. The initial phase of the project aimed at supporting 100 female-headed households in Hebron municipality through the provision of shelter and opportunities to engage in income-generating activities.

30. UNDP reported on the establishment of eight centres for the empowerment of community women. Within the framework of the community centres activation project, those centres were established in collaboration with UNIFEM and a Young Men's Christian Association women's training programme. The establishment of the centres (2 in the north of the West Bank and 6 in southern West Bank) have contributed to job creation and enhanced women's access to services and resources. In addition, UNDP, with support from the United States Agency for International Development, established a rural women's empowerment centre in the northern West Bank village of Shufa. Educational and economic empowerment programmes

were initiated in partnership with the municipality and with the technical support of UNIFEM. In order to enhance girls' access to education, approximately eight schools for girls were constructed, extended or rehabilitated, including upgraded sanitary facilities, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

31. Empowering Palestinian women and fostering their contribution to economic development was among the main objectives of the UNCTAD integrated capacity-building programme. The project for promoting the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises sought to foster individual entrepreneurial capabilities and build institutional capacity for establishing a dynamic private sector and internationally competitive small- and medium-sized enterprises. Women were encouraged to join the programme through targeted promotional activities, including seminars and print advertisements. Moreover, the project stipulated that at least 30 per cent of participants in the initial achievement motivation workshop, the Entrepreneurship Training Workshop, should be women. To date, the programme had attracted 17 women out of 61 entrepreneurs. They included promising women entrepreneurs, including the owners/managers of existing enterprises, and those who were willing to start their own businesses.

32. UNIDO activities in Palestine aimed at building the capacity of the Ministry of Industry and the Private Sector to promote and foster the sustainable development of the Palestinian industrial sector in terms of competitiveness, quality, productivity, export, partnership potential, contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP), as well as the creation of sustainable employment and income-generating opportunities. Those activities, directly or indirectly, benefited Palestinian women.

Humanitarian assistance

33. UNRWA provided essential educational, health, relief and social services to over 4 million registered Palestine refugees in the Agency's five areas of operations: Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Agency's assistance to Palestine refugee women focused on education and technical training, delivery of women-focused health services, social service support and the provision of microfinance. UNRWA also provided emergency assistance to the Palestinian refugees living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to respond to the urgent needs generated by the ongoing crisis. The emergency appeal programmes focused on food aid, emergency employment creation, repair and reconstruction of the conflict-damaged infrastructure in kind and cash assistance, and mobile health clinics. The Agency created 2,037,886 days of temporary work under its direct-hire programme and community-based infrastructure and construction projects to help beneficiaries maintain minimum levels of income and support their families. In the Gaza Strip, approximately 20 per cent of the beneficiaries of the direct-hire component were female heads of households, while in West Bank, due to the nature of the work, around 12 per cent of the beneficiaries were women.

34. Through its socio-economic unit, UNSCO continued to monitor social and humanitarian indicators relating specifically to women, such as access to health-care services, and the incidence of childbirth at roadblocks and checkpoints. This information has been shared for use in the reports of key partners, such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. UNSCO also undertook a comprehensive study of the impact of economic fragmentation on rural communities in the West Bank, highlighting the specific effect of closures on women.

35. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs coordinated the response of United Nations agencies and other humanitarian bodies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Consolidated Appeals Process included four themes: fragmentation; impoverishment; acute crisis areas; and protection of civilians. Gender-based projects were integrated into the Consolidated Appeals Process and the Common Humanitarian Action Plan to address the impact of the humanitarian crisis on women.

36. UNHCR reported on programme activities that were designed to ensure the participation and empowerment of refugee women in decision-making. Of the 8,873 Palestinian refugees registered in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, approximately 4,000 were women. UNHCR assisted 2,274 refugees. Refugee women had access to material assistance, counselling and medical support through UNHCR implementing partners. Refugee women in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya continued to benefit from the job placement activities, microcredit project schemes and job-oriented and vocational training of UNHCR.

37. The WFP office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory achieved significant progress in advocating the role of Palestinian women in management and access to food assistance and participation in food-for-work and food-for-training activities, implemented in partnership with key organizations and ministries working closely with women. Some food-for-training courses included gender sensitization, introduction to HIV/AIDS awareness and women's human rights. Women were encouraged to personally receive their food entitlement or were authorized to designate another person to collect the rations on their behalf.

Education and training

38. The World Bank reported on a tertiary education project ($10 million) that aimed to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and to provide support to higher education institutions to improve their management and the quality and relevance of programmes. During the period under review, the Development Grant Facility supported the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research in its regional research work on Arab women and decision-making, which includes a Palestinian national research team.

39. Education programmes continued to be one of the primary means by which UNRWA promoted the development of girls and women. In the 2004/05 academic year, some 489,000 pupils, half of them girls, were enrolled in the Agency's elementary, preparatory and secondary schools. More than half of the Agency's teachers were women, as were 67 per cent of the 1,170 participants in pre-service teacher training courses. UNRWA administered 110 scholarships for Palestinian women in Lebanon and other scholarship projects for approximately 70 female refugees. The UNRWA Department of Education, in collaboration with UNIFEM, continued to assist Palestine refugee women in acquiring modern technological skills. The project emphasized equal access to information and communication technologies (ICT) by Palestine refugee women as well as men, encouraged gender equality in recruitment and retention policies, and built capacity to produce appropriate information content for Palestine refugee women to assist them to fulfil their socio-economic, reproductive and community roles. UNRWA also promoted community participation by and community services for Palestine refugee women through 65 women's programme centres. Activities included occupational training

programmes, kindergartens and nurseries. Over 133,450 refugees, mainly women and children, benefited from these services.

40. UNICEF provided 40,000 children in areas affected by violence, deteriorating economic conditions and closures with remedial worksheets, school bags and stationary, as well as basic clothing. A total of 904 school-in-a-box kits were purchased, of which 375 were distributed to schools in Gaza. The rest were pre-positioned to the West Bank in order to provide emergency response in the districts of Nablus and Hebron. The kits assisted about 70,000 students to continue their education during closures. UNICEF also piloted the child-friendly school concept in 100 schools in Gaza and the West Bank. In addition to ensuring that physical school conditions were more child-friendly, especially for girls, the project trained approximately 850 schoolteachers on child-centred pedagogy and participatory school and classroom processes. The participation of adolescent girls in year-round sports programmes, including summer recreational activities, was realized. Out of a total of more than 6,000 adolescents, 3,250 females participated in weekly sports programmes aimed at relieving stress and the damaging effects of violence.

41. UNESCO provided policy and planning advice and other capacity-building assistance to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. By supporting the provision of gender-responsive educational services, including guidance and counselling for school-age girls, teacher training and the production of learning materials, UNESCO focused on eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education in the Palestinian territories. In collaboration with UNIFEM and the Ministry of Women's Affairs, UNESCO developed training in the areas of vocational counselling and guidance for girls in grades 8 to 12; academic assistance; and workshops for parents to raise their awareness of the importance of education for girls.

42. The Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs reported that one of three trainees from the Palestinian Authority in the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority was a woman.

43. UNFPA organized training at the Ministry of Women's Affairs to improve mainstreaming of gender perspectives in the planning process and monitoring of progress through the development, testing and use of gender analysis tools, including for gender audits. Training was also provided for women newly elected to municipalities and focused on developing capacities for advocacy and mobilization of communities in local development, particularly women.

44. UN-Habitat supported a technical and vocational training centre for underprivileged women in the southern area of the Gaza Strip, with an initial funding of $2 million. There were previously only two such training centres for women in the northern and central areas of the Gaza Strip, and women's enrolment in vocational, industrial and commercial training schools and institutes was marginal. The proposed centre for the southern area of the Gaza Strip targeted women who were registered as hardship cases with the Ministry of Social Affairs. The project aimed at empowering women who were the poorest of the poor, without income, or who were socially marginalized as divorcees, widows and heads of households.

45. OHCHR organized training courses for different target groups, including Palestinian police forces and prison personnel, judges and workers in the

development field, taking into consideration gender balance in the selection of participants and integrating women's issues into all training activities. Training curricula and programmes included sessions on women's rights. In addition, OHCHR worked closely with the Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs to carry out training sessions for Ministry staff.

Health

46. In order to address the challenges of high fertility rates and promote the health status of Palestine refugee women, UNRWA continued providing maternal and child health-care and reproductive health services as an integral part of its primary health care. A total of 85,737 women received antenatal care in five fields of operation of the Agency. In addition, 20,088 new women sought family planning guidance. The total number of continuing users was 104,803. UNRWA also sustained full immunization coverage of women and children against vaccine-preventable diseases. Those services were supported by school health services, the provision of iron supplements for women throughout pregnancy and post delivery, and health education programmes on the prevention of tobacco use and the prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

47. WHO reported on a project to strengthen the nutrition department of the Ministry of Health and establish a national nutrition surveillance system. The project assisted the development of a nutrition department, improved the technical capacity of relevant personnel, developed nutrition-related policy documents and plans of action, and supported training and research on improving nutritional services, particularly for women and children. The project benefited women by strengthening nutrition surveillance systems and coordinating nutrition activities through thematic groups and nutrition service delivery, particularly for women.

48. UNFPA reported on a capacity-building programme to support the Ministry of Health that focused on improving the quality of services and expanding the scope of the reproductive health package to include early detection of the most common cancers among women (breast and cervical cancer), in addition to ante- and post-natal and family planning counselling, management of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and reproductive tract infections, and health education. Guidelines and protocols for reproductive health services were developed for hospitals and primary health centres. Special attention was paid to the prevention of HIV/AIDS and STIs through the STIs/HIV/AIDS management/provider's manual and training of health providers. In addition, UNFPA designed a programme to train health providers, general practitioners, midwives, nurses and community health workers to reach 10,000 pregnant women and 50,000 people who reside in 100 selected localities. Moreover, a training workshop addressed different reproductive health issues, including gender-based violence, counselling skills, family planning and reproductive rights.

49. In preparation for the disengagement operations in the northern West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNICEF provided critical supplies for mothers and children in the form of emergency health kits, midwifery and obstetric kits, and family water kits, raised community awareness on appropriate hygiene practices and promoted breastfeeding. In areas where access to health facilities was difficult, support was provided to such facilities, together with the upgrade of the skills of health-care workers. UNICEF also provided vaccines and vaccine-related supplies to cover 100 per cent of

Palestinian children and women of child-bearing age for the immunization services provided by the Ministry of Health, UNRWA and non-governmental organizations. UNICEF initiated a pilot project aimed at promoting awareness of HIV/AIDS among adolescent girls and boys.

50. The UNAIDS secretariat supported the participation of seven representatives from the Occupied Palestinian Territory national AIDS committee, medical relief committees and the Culture and Free Thought Association in the UNAIDS regional meeting on the theme "Women, girls and HIV/AIDS", held in Amman in February 2005.

Women's human rights, including violence against women

51. UNICEF equipped mothers with the basic skills to detect distress among their children and to respond to it, as well as to deal with their own stress. Groups of mothers were formed in the areas most affected by violence and movement restrictions, such as those in the proximity of settlements or the wall. Each group attended a series of 12 sessions, addressing issues such as child developmental stages, child rights, psychosocial well-being, and the negative impact of early marriage and domestic violence and abuse. More than 15,000 caregivers, the majority of whom were mothers, attended such sessions.

52. In support of the right to due process, UNICEF provided legal aid for girls as well as boys. UNICEF also set up a monitoring system which gathered data on, inter alia, charges, sentencing, pre-trial detention and age and geographic location. The situation of children in detention was monitored and legal aid was provided.

53. OHCHR continued to support the Palestinian National Authority through a project on the rule of law. The project had a positive impact on women's rights by addressing specific problems of discrimination and domestic injustices, including by vetting national laws for adherence to international human rights standards and norms. The project also sought to empower women to know and claim their rights. On 3 March, OHCHR participated in a workshop organized by the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme and the Women's Empowerment Programme on women's political participation in Gaza City, involving activists from civil society and the governmental sector. It was also involved in a meeting in Gaza for approximately 70 women in a marginalized area of Gaza City organized by the Palestinian Working Women's Society for Development, which focused on women's rights, including women's participation in political life, in the context of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other human rights instruments.

54. As part of efforts to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), UNFPA provided support to Palestinian women to produce a lexicon for advocacy purposes. Such support was undertaken in a participatory manner, together with the Coalition Combating Violence against Women and other governmental institutions, to promote national consensus on terminology on major issues related to gender-based violence. The lexicon also promoted examples of best practices from each of the institutions. UNFPA, together with the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, implemented advocacy activities on sensitizing legislators, decision-makers and community leaders on the negative effects of early marriage on the development of Palestinian society.

55. UNIFEM negotiated an agreement with the Ministry of Women's Affairs to initiate a national programme on women's rights, with focus on femicide.

Advocacy

56. In organizing international meetings and conferences for, and under the guidance of, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs has included items dealing with the situation of Palestinian women and ensured the participation of women's organizations and women representatives of other civil society organizations. The meetings focused on the legal aspects of the question of Palestine in light of the 2004 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.[32] The hardship caused by the wall for Palestinian women through limiting their access to places of work and worship, schools, hospitals and community services formed part of the deliberations. Renowned women lawyers, and women activists from civil society organizations working in the field of law, were among the panellists guiding the discussions.

57. The Department of Public Information carried out a special information programme on the question of Palestine, in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 59/30 of 1 December 2004, aimed at sensitizing public opinion. Working in close cooperation with the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs, and through it with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Department used a variety of means to inform the public and reach out to the media and civil society. The United Nations News Centre continued its coverage of developments related to the situation in the Occupied Territories and its effect on Palestinian women. Various United Nations activities, statements and documents related to the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women were also highlighted through a special "News Focus: Middle East" page featured on the United Nations News Centre. The Department of Public Information issued 18 press releases (9 each in French and English) dealing specifically with assistance to Palestinian women.

58. United Nations in Action series of UNTV featured a programme on microcredit schemes for Palestinian women, which highlighted the role of UNRWA.[33] In its daily news programmes and current affairs magazines for worldwide and regional dissemination, United Nations Radio covered, inter alia, the report of a round-table discussion with three Palestinian women representing non-governmental organizations to CEDAW held during its March 2005 session; the report on the struggle for equality of Palestinian women living in Israel 10 years after Beijing; the affirmation by CEDAW of the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories according to a report introduced by Palestinian Women; the report introduced by the Arab Women in Israel to CEDAW on Israeli discrimination against Arab women in Israel; a report on a delegation of Palestinian Women who travelled to New York to participate in Beijing+10; and a report on cooperation between the Palestinian Ministry of Women Affairs and the World Bank.

59. ESCWA provided technical assistance to the Palestinian National Authority Ministry of Women's Affairs for building the capacities of its Advocacy, Media and Communications Department. Three training workshops were conducted for

Ministry staff on addressing gender issues in plans and programmes of other ministries and to improve their use of data and statistics for lobbying and advocacy. The ESCWA Centre for Women developed an interactive website to include country profiles on Arab women, including Palestinian women. Those profiles are updated on a regular basis to reflect the latest developments in population dynamics, health, poverty, education, human rights, conflict, labour, political participation and leadership and the work of the national machinery and non-governmental organizations.

60. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs chaired the inter-agency advocacy group, which includes members of the key United Nations humanitarian agencies operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. During 2005, the Office initiated a group activity on the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March. The inter-agency advocacy group published a press release entitled "Towards a more secure future: United Nations agencies operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territory call for action in improving the situation of Palestinian women". Signed by 10 agencies, the press release was sent to the local media and received good coverage.

61. The Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs updated its documents collection under the subject category "Women" in the Internet-based United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) and electronic links to relevant websites outside UNISPAL. The special web address permitting external websites to link to the UNISPAL subject category on Palestinian women on an ongoing basis was also maintained.

62. In terms of its publications programme, the Division for Palestinian Rights included information on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, as available, in its monthly monitoring publications *Chronological Review of Events Relating to the Question of Palestine* and *Monthly Bulletin*, which review action taken by the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations relevant to the question of Palestine, as well as other publications.

Institutional arrangements

63. UNDP supported the newly established Ministry of Women's Affairs in the development of a three-year strategic action plan whose central objective was the empowerment of and support to Palestinian women to actively participate in building and developing a democratic Palestinian state. Since June 2005, the gender mainstreaming capacity of the Ministry and newly created gender units of various line Ministries has been increased in order to provide decision makers with the needed skills and knowledge to operationalize their commitment to gender equality and women's rights.

64. The ESCWA Centre for Women sponsored technical assistance activities and advisory services on institution-building in the Ministry of Women's Affairs, concentrating on the formulation of the Ministry's strategy and policy document. Advisory services were also provided to enhance the technical cooperation programme of the poverty alleviation department of the Ministry. Capacity-building training workshops were organized and conducted for Ministry officials.

65. The Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals and the UNV programmes continued to support the ongoing efforts of UNDP, UNIFEM and the Ministry of Women's Affairs to ensure that gender issues were mainstreamed in all policies and reflected in all programmes. In this regard, UNV supported the institutionalization process within the newly established Ministry of Women's Affairs through the provision of gender training, an ICT unit and support to the development of a website for Palestinian women to meet and share experiences.

66. In response to a joint request from Palestinian and Israeli women leaders and activists, UNIFEM convened and facilitated a strategy and planning meeting from 26 to 28 July 2005 in Istanbul, Turkey. The purpose of the meeting was to develop and advance a plan to establish an international women's commission for a just and sustainable Israeli-Palestinian peace. The Commission was established in the context of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and other international conventions and instruments that call upon States parties to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict. The Commission brought together Palestinian, Israeli and international women dedicated to end the Israeli occupation and bring about a just peace based on international law, human rights and equality. The Commission worked for an ongoing and comprehensive reconciliation in order to realize a mutually secure and sustainable peace and co-existence within the context of mainstream negotiations.

IV. Conclusion and recommendations

67. **During the reporting period, the impact of the conflict continued to adversely affect women in all spheres of life. Women and their families lived in a permanent state of insecurity, tension and fear (E/CN.4/2005/72/Add.4, para. 74). They were negatively affected by the restrictions on movement, the deteriorating economic conditions, poverty and lack of access to health care and health services. Palestinian women continued to bear the combined burdens of occupation and patriarchy which have deepened their inequality and denied them the possibility for enjoyment of rights, fundamental freedoms and liberty (Ibid., para. 72).**

68. **The outcome document of the 2005 World Summit highlighted the importance of eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls. The important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding was also highlighted. Member States reaffirmed their commitment to the full and effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. In this regard, it is important that Palestinian women are fully involved in all conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives, including at decision-making levels. Taking into account that women tend to suffer disproportionately during times of political unrest and instability, there is a need to mainstream gender perspectives in policies and programmes to ensure that the contribution, priorities and needs of both women and men are addressed.**

69. **Entities of the United Nations have continued to make efforts to improve the situation of Palestinian women. Member States, entities of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant institutions**

should intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women.

70. **The Commission may wish to encourage entities of the United Nations system to increase the participation of women in all assistance activities in order to fully integrate women's priorities and needs in the development process, for example, through increasing women's involvement in poverty-reduction programmes.**

71. **The newly established Ministry of Women's Affairs has undertaken important initiatives to promote gender mainstreaming in all ministries. United Nations entities and other international organizations should continue to coordinate and collaborate to provide financial, advisory and technical assistance to the Ministry and to gender units in line ministries to ensure that gender perspectives are identified and addressed in policies and programmes in all policy areas.**

Notes

[1] The contribution of UNICEF to the preparation of the present report.

[2] UNICEF input to the preparation of the report.

[3] The *Palestine Human Development Report 2004* was prepared by the Birzeit University, Development Studies Programme, with support from the United Nations Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People and in association with the Ministry of Planning.

[4] See *Palestine Human Development Report 2004*.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] International Labour Organization, "Report of the Director-General on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories" (Geneva, 2005) para. 31.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., para. 17.

[10] Ibid., para. 19.

[11] Ibid., para. 19.

[12] *Palestine Human Development Report 2004*.

[13] Ibid.

[14] International Labour Organization, op. cit., para. 20.

[15] UNICEF input to the preparation of the present report.

[16] See *Palestine Human Development Report 2004*.

[17] Ibid.

[18] International Labour Organization, op. cit., para. 10.

[19] Ibid., para. 10.

[20] Ibid., preface.

[21] See *Palestine Human Development Report 2004*.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] International Labour Organization, op. cit., para. 63.

[25] Ibid., para. 80.

[26] Ibid., preface.

[27] Ibid., preface.

[28] Ibid., para. 88.

[29] Ibid., para. 24.

[30] Ibid., para. 14.

[31] Ibid., para. 14.

[32] United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine, United Nations Office at Geneva, 8 and 9 March 2005; United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of Middle East Peace, UNESCO headquarters, Paris, 12 and 13 July 2005.

[33] The programme was aired on CNN International in January 2005.

United Nations E/CN.6/2006/5

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
30 December 2005

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fiftieth session
27 February-10 March 2006
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

The situation of women and girls in Afghanistan**

Summary

The present report provides an update of the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan in 2005, in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/8, with particular focus on the electoral process, efforts to promote and protect the rights of women and girls and social and economic reconstruction and rehabilitation. It includes information on activities undertaken by the United Nations system in support of the work of the Government of Afghanistan for the advancement of women and gender equality. While significant gains have been made by Afghan women and girls, including in the legal, political and educational areas, progress is not felt in all parts of the country and the gender development indicators remain among the worst in the world. Continuous and widespread incidents of human rights violations and violence against women call for prompt and enhanced action by both the Government and the international community.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

** The submission of the present report was delayed due to the need for further consultations with relevant United Nations entities.

05-66818 (E) 240106

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–3	3
II.	Intergovernmental processes	4–9	3
III.	Elections	10–18	4
IV.	Activities of the Ministry of Women's Affairs	19–26	6
V.	Violence against women and access to justice	27–46	7
	A. Violence against women	27–34	7
	B. Human rights, transitional justice and the rule of law	35–46	9
VI.	Social and economic reconstruction and rehabilitation	47–64	12
	A. Health	47–51	12
	B. Education	52–56	13
	C. Economic empowerment and poverty reduction	57–59	14
	D. Return of refugees and internally displaced persons	60–64	15
VII.	Coordination of United Nations and donor assistance	65–69	15
VIII.	Conclusion and recommendations	70–75	16

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in compliance with paragraph 6 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/8 on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan.

2. The report updates information on political, social and economic developments affecting Afghan women since the last report of the Commission dated 22 December 2004 (E/CN.6/2005/5). It draws on information provided, inter alia, by organizations and bodies of the United Nations system[1] and concludes with a set of recommendations.

3. Given the oppression from which Afghan women emerged in late 2001, the gains they have made in the past few years, including in the legal, political and educational areas, are significant. Progress made in stabilizing Afghanistan's system of governance contributed to the enhancement of women's participation in the political process. Nevertheless, women and girls in Afghanistan remain beset with formidable security, economic, social and human rights challenges. Afghanistan's first human development report *Security with a Human Face*, launched by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on 21 February 2005, stresses that generating the means to provide services and jobs and protect human rights, especially in rural areas is one of the main security challenges to the reconstruction process. Using the Gender Development Index (GDI), which combines life expectancy, educational achievements and standard of living indicators, the report shows that Afghan women have one of the lowest GDI indicators in the world. Poverty, illiteracy, limited access to health care and continuous violence against women, call for prompt and effective country-wide action by the Afghan Government and the international community.

II. Intergovernmental processes

4. Throughout the reporting period, the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan was examined in various United Nations forums, including the General Assembly, the Security Council, and two functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council (the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights).

5. In their discussions of the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, the Security Council and the General Assembly addressed the preparations for the parliamentary and local elections, including the nomination of women candidates, challenges in institution-building, the reform of the justice and security sectors and economic recovery. The related reports of the Secretary-General[2] stressed that the security situation continued to be of paramount concern, with violence on the increase and the pervasive drug economy posing a significant threat to the long-term security and development of Afghanistan.

6. On 30 November 2006, the General Assembly adopted resolutions 60/32 A and B, in which it applauded the substantive progress achieved in the empowerment of women in Afghan politics. The Assembly reiterated the continued importance of the full and equal participation of women in all spheres of Afghan life, including in the development, recovery and reconstruction programmes. It called for full respect of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all, without discrimination of any

kind, including on the basis of gender, ethnicity or religion, in accordance with obligations under the Afghan Constitution and international law, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It strongly condemned incidents of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

7. On 27 October 2005, on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, the Council held an open debate on the theme "Women's participation in peace processes". Invited to address the Council, the country director of Women for Women International Afghanistan noted[3] that significant progress had been made in terms of de jure rights for women and increased political participation. She described the serious challenges, including threats, forced/early marriages and other types of violence facing women in trying to exercise their rights. She emphasized that strengthening of the rule of law and the empowerment of women through capacity-building, education, information sharing and access to resources required the sustained support and attention of the international community.

8. In her report to the General Assembly,[4] the High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that the human rights situation in the country remained of great concern. The report called, inter alia, for concrete measures to address the widespread and persistent human rights violations against women and girl children, including forced/early marriages, crimes against the person and discrimination in the justice system.

9. The independent expert of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan reported,[5] inter alia, violations of women's rights by the State and discrimination related to an array of social practices. He recommended that the Government continue to create comprehensive and sustainable policies to improve the situation of women and children, with special attention to health, education, economic opportunities and political empowerment, and consider women's rights and children's rights in all aspects of policy planning and implementation.

III. Elections

10. For the first time since 1988, on 18 September 2005, parliamentary elections for the Wolesi Jirga (House of the People), the lower house of the Afghan National Assembly, and provincial council elections were held. The elections had been originally scheduled for June 2004, in tandem with the presidential vote, but had to be postponed twice for logistical and security reasons. In accordance with the Constitution, on 24 January 2005, the President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, established the Independent Electoral Commission, consisting of six men and three women, representing different ethnic groups. The Commission was assisted by international electoral experts, who together constituted the Joint Electoral Management Body overseeing the organization of the elections. The Joint Electoral Management Body established a Gender Section, which worked closely with departments of the Managing Body active in areas such as public outreach, training and capacity-building. During the electoral process, the Gender Section was mandated to provide support for women candidates, voters and organizations in preparation for the elections.

11. Despite enhanced security measures, violence was rife during the election campaign. In the south and the east of the country, Taliban forces re-emerged and tried to disrupt the elections for the Wolesi Jirga and the provincial councils, albeit with little success, while in other areas local military commanders attempted to influence election results and intimidated voters and women candidates. Seven parliamentary candidates and six election workers were killed during the two-month campaign prior to election day. Two hundred and eighty-six candidates, including 51 women, voluntarily withdrew their candidacy,[6] some citing security concerns.

12. Women made up 41.6 per cent of the total 12.5 million voters who registered in 2004 and 2005. Overall, 43 per cent of the women registered to vote actually cast a ballot. An estimated 6 million of some 12.5 million eligible voters cast their ballots, far fewer than the 8 million voters who had participated in the presidential election in October 2004. A total of 2,753 candidates, 12 per cent of whom were women, stood for election to the Wolesi Jirga for a five-year term.

13. As required under the Constitution, women gained 68 (27 per cent) of the 249 seats in the Wolesi Jirga. In Herat, a woman candidate received the most votes out of 17 candidates. Women also secured 121 (29 per cent) out of the 420 seats in the provincial councils. Five provincial seats reserved for women remain vacant owing to the lack of women candidates in three provinces, while women won two provincial council seats in Kabul, in addition to those seats reserved for women.

14. The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) produced three joint reports on the verification of political rights for the Wolesi Jirga and provincial council elections during the period from 19 April to 13 September.[7] As far as the types of violations and incidents that constrained the exercise of political rights during the nomination and campaign periods, the reports noted that women candidates had been the target of a number of acts of discrimination, intimidation and violent attacks in some areas. However, this did not prevent the majority of women candidates from undertaking campaign activities nor did it discourage women voters from attending political events and rallies. In many areas, local authorities and police had been particularly responsive to women's security concerns and provided them with guards upon request. A majority of women candidates reported that lack of both financial resources and means of transportation posed serious impediments to their campaigning activities.

15. A Gender Elections Task Force was established in March 2004 as a subgroup of the Advisory Group on Gender.[8] The Task Force regrouped in early 2005 to focus on women's participation in the September elections. In March 2005, the Task Force submitted gender-sensitive amendments to the electoral law to the Independent Electoral Commission. In the run-up to elections, the Task Force addressed the obstacles facing women candidates campaigning for office as well as the issue of their personal security.

16. To increase women's participation in the elections and ensure their security, separate polling stations were set up for women. Out of a total 26,243 polling stations throughout Afghanistan, 11,387 were established for women.[9] In some parts of the country, the Afghan national police and army received special training for the elections. To alleviate the security concerns of women candidates, voters and civil educators, UNAMA worked with the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Women's

Affairs and chiefs of police in the provinces, alerting them to situations where women have been at risk.

17. The Women's Political Preparatory Committee, established in April 2004, focused on activities promoting women's political participation and women in leadership positions. The Committee was composed of women members of political parties, women members of the Constitutional Loya Jirga and women from civil society. The Committee provided training workshops, manuals and documentation, logistical support and advice. Support and advice to the Committee was provided by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the German Development Service in Afghanistan as well as through German and international development cooperation.

18. In August 2005, the Women's Political Preparatory Committee submitted to the presidential office a list of potential women candidates for the presidential appointees list. Out of a total of 102 seats in the Meshrano Jirga (House of Elders), the upper house of the National Assembly, 34 were appointed by the President. Half of those seats were reserved for women, as stipulated in article 84 of the Constitution. Of the remaining 68 elected members of the Meshrano Jirga, six are women, two of whom hold permanent seats, while the other four hold temporary ones. The total number of women members of the Meshrano Jirga, including the presidential appointees, is 23, or 22 per cent of the total membership.

IV. Activities of the Ministry of Women's Affairs

19. During the reporting period, further steps were taken to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and its 34 provincial offices. The Ministry continued to support the Government's policy of advancing the role of women, including by providing assistance and guidance to line ministries in efforts to integrate gender perspectives into their work programmes and budgets. The Ministry also oversaw the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and worked closely with UNAMA and political parties to promote women's political participation and to assist women candidates in the elections.

20. With technical assistance from UNDP and the UNAMA Gender Unit, the Ministry has played a leading role to ensure gender mainstreaming in the follow-up to and implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Ministry participated actively in consultations with key line ministries on the Afghan MDG targets and indicators to ensure that Afghan women's needs and priorities were taken into consideration. The Ministry also received technical support from UNIFEM in the development of a national action plan for women, framed along the lines of the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action. Efforts are under way to ensure that the national action plan for women is endorsed by the Government and integrated into the national development strategy, to be reflected in institutional budgets and implemented by line ministries. The national action plan is currently being finalized.

21. In December 2004, UNAMA and the Ministry signed an implementation agreement for a project entitled "capacity-building of provincial departments of women's affairs". The project covers 15 provinces of Afghanistan. Its aim is to

contribute to the improved capacity of the Government to respond to the needs of women and girls. Within the framework of the project, one national and three regional workshops on women's political participation were organized prior to the elections and transportation was provided to 10 provincial departments of women's affairs. The project is scheduled for completion in the spring 2006.

22. In April 2005, UNAMA and UNDP assisted the Ministry in drafting recommendations to the Head of the Afghan Civil Service Commission and the Minister of Justice on the proposed civil service law. The recommendations addressed structural disadvantages faced by women in recruitment and hiring processes for senior civil service positions. They also incorporated gender equality provisions in promotions and remuneration policies.

23. With the support of UNDP, the Ministry continued its efforts to institutionalize its gender-training programme by working with the Civil Service Commission to make gender training an integral part of the civil service training. National programmes, such as the national solidarity programme, have also been approached. Throughout the reporting period, a total of 635 staff members from different ministries have been trained through the Ministry's inter-ministerial gender training programme.

24. With the assistance of UNIFEM, the Ministry monitors Government action on the implementation of the gender provisions in "The Way Ahead: The Work Plan of the Afghan Government" presented at the Afghanistan Conference in Berlin on 31 March and 1 April 2005. The workplan explicitly set out the Government's commitment to address the needs of women in the economic, health and education sectors and to promote their participation in the civil service.

25. In response to President Karzai's instruction to the Cabinet for giving immediate attention to the nine poorest provinces, Nooristan, Zabul, Panjsher, Daikundi, Badghis, Uruzgan, Paktia, Samangan and Ghor, the Ministry, with the support of UNDP, prepared and carried out a survey in May 2005, assessing the needs and priorities of women in those provinces. The report addressed priorities in four areas: legal status, education, health and economy. As a follow-up, on the instruction of the Cabinet, each ministry was tasked to prepare a workplan for responding to the needs and priorities of women in these provinces.

26. The Ministry continued to coordinate and implement advocacy campaigns on women's rights and violence against women in connection with International Women's Day, 8 March 2005, and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 25 November 2005, with the support of United Nations entities, including UNDP.

V. Violence against women and access to justice

A. Violence against women

27. In July 2005, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, carried out a fact-finding mission to Afghanistan. She held meetings with Government officials, members of the judiciary, prosecutors, police officers, doctors and representatives of non-governmental and international organizations in Kabul, Kandahar and Herat. She also visited prisons and shelters

for women and received testimonies from women victims of violence. In her press statement of 18 July 2005, the Special Rapporteur noted that although considerable change in the legal and institutional framework concerning the situation of women in Afghanistan had occurred in the past three and a half years, violence against women remained dramatic in its intensity and pervasiveness in the public and private spheres of life. In particular, she highlighted widespread forced and child marriages as one of the primary sources of violence against women.

28. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission estimates that between 60 and 80 per cent of marriages in the country are forced marriages. Many of those marriages, especially in rural areas, involve girls below the age of 15. Recent reports indicate that child marriages make up more than 40 per cent of all marriages in Afghanistan.[4] In addition to early and forced marriages, domestic violence, sexual violence, kidnapping, forced seclusion, so-called honour killings and the exchange of girls and women for debt or feud (*bad*) continued to be a major part of women's and girls' lives in Afghanistan and remained one of the pervasive barriers to women's empowerment and gender equality. The lack of adequate support and responses to women victims of violence has been linked to the high rate of incidents of self-immolation across the country. In Herat alone, there were 75 reported cases of self-immolation during 2005. Women are often discouraged or forbidden from pursuing activities outside the home. Cases of forced prostitution and trafficking among foreign women and Afghan women and children were also reported in 2005.

29. On 6 June 2005, the Inter-Ministerial Task Force to Eliminate Violence against Women was established by presidential decree. The task force, which is headed by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, is made up of high-level Afghan officials from the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, the Supreme Court, the Attorney General's Office, the Ministries of Pilgrimage, Information and Culture, Public Health, Foreign Affairs, Refugees, Interior, and Education and the Afghan Women Judges Association. The task force is mandated to supervise and coordinate action and policy on violence against women at the national level. The task force developed a three-month plan of work, identifying strategies and actions to improve the response of the judicial and law enforcement systems, after which it recommended, inter alia, the training of court officials, and the staff of the Attorney General's Office and police departments on handling cases of violence against women.

30. The UNAMA Human Rights Unit has monitored and investigated cases of violence against women and intervened in situations where women have been at risk and brought them to safe places. The legal department of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, with the support of UNIFEM, has developed a national directory listing agencies and organizations providing support services to women victims of violence.

31. UNIFEM supported the establishment of a consultative group on violence against women, comprising representatives of civil society and Government, to advocate and work for the elimination of violence against women. UNIFEM also provided technical and financial support to civil society organizations promoting women's rights and providing legal services.

32. On 7 February 2005, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) signed a partnership agreement with the Afghan Independent

Human Rights Commission to enhance its returnee monitoring capacity, including monitoring, documenting, reporting and intervening in human rights abuses and violations, including violence against women.

33. Through its women-at-risk programme, UNHCR continued to support Afghan women's non-governmental organizations providing support to women in difficult circumstances and in need of medical, psychological and legal support, including three safe houses or shelters, run by Afghan women's non-governmental organizations (two in Kabul and one in Herat). The women in the shelters are often unaccompanied deportees and women escaping from forced marriages (often with much older men), domestic violence and so-called honour killings. While in many cases, solutions can be found through mediation, family-reunification, intervention of the authorities or legal and psychological counselling, many women have no option but to live in the shelters for prolonged periods. Women residing in the shelters have been offered income generating opportunities following educational and professional training. However, it is difficult for single Afghan women without male family support to live independent lives outside shelters.

34. Serious challenges in addressing issues related to violence against women in Afghanistan remain. The vast majority of cases of violence against women are unreported, and when they are reported there is inadequate or non-existing protection or remedy. Psychosocial support and mental health services to women survivors of violence and harmful traditional practices are very limited. Violence in the private sphere is perceived as a family issue and women and girls who experience violence are either unable or afraid to report the problem to the authorities. If they leave their family environment they risk criminal charges, incarceration and stigmatization from the community. Furthermore, the limited information available indicates that only in very rare cases do perpetrators face any sanctions. This is illustrated by the absence of criminal charges against those who marry under-age girls in all regions of the country. Therefore, the initiatives by the Government and other actors, including through the Inter-Ministerial Task Force, are of critical importance and should be further supported, strengthened and monitored.

B. Human rights, transitional justice and the rule of law

35. The Independent Expert of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan noted in his report[10] that there was a justice deficit at almost every level of society in Afghanistan. The report drew attention to the severe limitation to women's access to justice. Discrimination against women in the justice system was also highlighted in the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the General Assembly.[4]

36. The Ministry of Justice, the Attorney General's Office and the Supreme Court, with the technical advice and support of UNDP and UNAMA, are in the process of finalizing a strategic reform framework for the justice sector entitled "Justice for all". It includes a detailed plan setting out priorities, benchmarks, timelines and costs. It is envisaged that once accomplished, this framework would guide future reform efforts and donor investments. The "Justice for all" policy paper acknowledges the situation of Afghan women who are severely disadvantaged under the existing legal system and calls for concerted action to protect women's rights. It

further raises concerns with respect to the treatment of women and children under the justice system and recommends that the traditional justice system comply with national laws and international legal standards. The final draft of "Justice for all" was transmitted to the Cabinet in September 2005 for its endorsement.

37. The limited legal qualifications of a majority of judges in Afghanistan has severely affected the quality of decisions being rendered. In effect, this often amounts to denial of justice. Accordingly, the capacity and qualification of the judiciary requires sustained attention. It is critical that attention be paid to the qualification of prospective candidates to the judiciary. It is noted that women still remain grossly underrepresented in the judiciary, making up only 7 per cent of the total number of judges in Afghan courts. The upcoming presidential appointment of Supreme Court judges, which should take place following the inauguration of the Parliament, offers an opportunity for corrective action.

38. UNDP, in close partnership with Afghan judicial institutions, has commenced the implementation of a new "Access to justice" project, aimed at providing information about the justice system to rural communities. The project will include legal awareness programmes and capacity-building for religious and community leaders.

39. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission's transitional justice programme, aims at the enhancement of respect for human rights and the promotion of national reconciliation. Under this programme, human rights abuses are documented, evidence of violations collected and methods for establishing accountability for past crimes developed through a nation-wide consultation process. Based on the 2005 report of the Commission, "A call for justice", an action plan for peace, justice and reconciliation was developed to implement a national strategy for transitional justice. The strategy includes five elements: acknowledgement of the suffering of the Afghan people; ensuring credible and accountable state institutions; truth-seeking and documentation; promotion of reconciliation; and the establishment of meaningful and effective accountability mechanisms. The action plan did not, however, envisage amnesty for war crimes, crimes against humanity or other gross human rights violations. The action plan was adopted by the Cabinet in December 2005.

40. The Women's Rights Unit of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission has continued to monitor and raise awareness about the promotion and protection of women's human rights, focusing on support to women's active participation in truth-seeking and reconciliation processes.

41. The Government decided to take a comprehensive approach to human rights reporting. The project "Capacity-building for sustained human rights treaty reporting in Afghanistan" was officially launched in Kabul on 27 November 2005. The project will be carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with other relevant line ministries. It aims at enhancement of the Government's capacity to report on the implementation of human rights treaties to which Afghanistan is party. The project encourages the participation of women's organizations and the collection of gender-sensitive data as part of its database. In April 2005, UNAMA, with the collaboration of UNIFEM and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs held a workshop for civil society organizations on shadow reporting on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of

Economic and Social Affairs, is planning a technical assistance mission to Afghanistan in 2006 to provide specific guidance and support on the reporting and implementation of the Convention.

42. The Legal Department of the Ministry of Women's Affairs has provided training for defense attorneys on legal services for women and conducted research on customary practices undermining women's human rights. A mapping exercise has been undertaken to determine whether laws are in line with the Constitution and international legal frameworks. The establishment of family courts throughout the different regions, the setting up of a database on legal cases as a monitoring tool for the efficiency of the justice apparatus in dealing with women's cases and the application of international legal provisions have been encouraged. These activities constitute important contributions to current legal reform initiatives in Afghanistan. The reforms under way must take into account women's legal rights, including under the family and personal status laws.

43. There is continued concern about the situation of women in detention and the issue of illegal detention. The Prison and Detention Centre Law, which was passed on 31 May 2005, stipulated that men and women in detention should be in separate facilities with special attention to women with children. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime provided support in drafting the new law and has taken steps to ensure that new premises would be built with due attention to the needs of women, in particular women with children. Where there are no local detention facilities, women accused of crimes have reportedly been placed in "private detention", usually in the house of the head of a village, where they are treated as prisoners and forced to work for the family. There are also reports of women arbitrarily detained when reporting crimes perpetrated against them, for violating social mores and as substitutes for their husbands or male relatives who have been convicted of crimes.[4] Women and girls have also been detained for "running away", an offence which has no basis in statutory law. These cases often have their roots in forced marriages or violence.[11]

44. The Human Rights Unit of UNAMA has continued to monitor the situation of women in detention and has advocated for the release of women in cases of arbitrary or illegal detention.

45. UNDP, through its Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, supported the efforts of the Ministry of Interior to rebuild the national civilian police force, including through a project with a special focus on gender issues and women's rights and the recruitment of women police officers. In March 2005, a gender adviser with experience in police organizations commenced work in the Ministry of Interior. The gender adviser developed a departmental gender mainstreaming action plan to support the recruitment, development and promotion of women within the Afghan National Police Force, which, to date, have been carried out with limited success. Among other steps taken to enhance the recruitment of women in the police, a women's residence with facilities for children has been established at the National Police Academy in Kabul.

46. At present, the Afghan National Police Force has only one Family Intervention Unit with an emergency telephone number to receive complaints from women victims of violence. Operated on a pilot basis and under-resourced, it is located in Kabul and staffed by women police officers. It is hoped that similar facilities will open in other regions.

VI. Social and economic reconstruction and rehabilitation

A. Health

47. Health indicators for women in Afghanistan remain unsatisfactory. The maternal mortality ratio, in particular, at 1,600 deaths per 100,000 live births, remains one of the highest in the world. The fertility rate is high, at 6.6 children per woman. Almost half the deaths among Afghan women of reproductive age are the result of complications of pregnancy and childbirth. About 87 per cent of the maternal deaths are preventable. Life expectancy is low; for women it is estimated at 44 years. Estimates indicate that only 40 per cent of the population has access to basic health facilities. The opportunities for psychosocial support are almost non-existent. According to a 2004 Government report, only 23 per cent of the population has access to safe water and only 12 per cent has access to adequate sanitation. Recent figures on tuberculosis indicate that over 60 per cent of new tuberculosis patients are women.

48. United Nations entities, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNIFEM, and international non-governmental organizations and donors have increased efforts to support the Government to reduce maternal mortality and provide health services to women. Steps taken include public awareness campaigns, efforts to increase access to health care and health information and the training of women health providers. In the Bamyan and Badakhshan provinces, 50 community midwives are currently being trained, and 20 women in the Takhar and Samangan provinces have received health and hygiene education. After completion of training, these women will reach out with health information to women and girls through house-to-house visits.

49. Technical and policy support has also been provided to the Ministry of Public Health in the establishment of norms and standards for maternal and newborn health care. As a support to training in emergency obstetric care, WHO has, to date, provided 3,000 copies of the manual, "Managing complications in pregnancy and childbirth" in Dari, which has been endorsed by the Ministry of Public Health as the national standard training manual for emergency obstetrics care. WHO is also supporting the Ministry of Public Health in introducing measures to improve the family planning programme. A target to eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus by the end of 2007 has been set and immunization campaigns have continued. UNFPA has worked with the Ministry to set up a Reproductive Health Unit.

50. The United Nations Theme Group on HIV/AIDS, led by UNICEF, is supporting the Government in developing community awareness programmes that improve access to quality HIV/AIDS information and services, with a special focus on at risk groups, including women and girls. The United Nations country team has agreed that one of the priorities of the 2006-2008 United Nations Development Assistance Framework will be the development of a multisectoral approach to HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, involving the Government and civil society, including community-based organizations, religious leaders and the media. This will include a specific focus on how HIV and AIDS are affecting women and girls.

51. Enhanced and coordinated efforts are urgently needed to improve women's access to health services, particularly reproductive health services, and to support the Government in meeting its goal of reducing maternal mortality by 25 per cent by 2008. Insecurity and lack of female doctors still prevent many women from seeking health care. Corrective action must address these problems as well.

B. Education

52. While a significant campaign to increase primary school enrolment has raised the enrolment of girls to almost 40 per cent, compared to 67 per cent for boys, overall school enrolment among girls remains among the lowest in the world, with less than 10 per cent of girls enrolled in secondary school. Dramatic disparities in enrolment between regions and urban and rural areas remain, with girls representing less than 15 per cent of the total enrolment in nine provinces in the east and the south. Schools also continue struggling with high drop-out rates and serious shortages of teachers, especially female teachers. In Uruzgan province, for example, there are no female teachers at all. It is estimated that 86 per cent or approximately 4.85 million women in Afghanistan between the ages 15 and 49 are illiterate, compared to 57 per cent of men. The high illiteracy rate among working age women has numerous adverse effects on domestic health, children's education levels and overall economic development.

53. Several United Nations entities, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) have invested in girls' education and women's literacy training as a means of reducing gender disparities and promoting the advancement of women. In its effort to support the education sector, UNICEF has trained more than 50,000 teachers, set up temporary learning spaces, assisted in the development of a new curriculum and provided teaching and learning materials to more than 4.7 million schoolchildren. In June 2004, the Director-General of UNESCO and the Afghan Minister of Education signed an aide-memoire with a focus on capacity-building in the areas of teacher training, curriculum reform, technical and vocational education and training and literacy. A strategic action plan for the development of higher education in Afghanistan has also been prepared jointly with the Ministry of Higher Education.

54. Through its school feeding operation, which targets over 3.2 million children, WFP has continued to contribute to the enhancement of children's school attendance. Girls receive an additional take-home ration of vegetable oil as an incentive for families to continue to send girls to school. In areas of acute or chronic food insecurity and/or inaccessible areas, WFP provides a monthly take-home ration of wheat to both girls and boys. To address the shortage of teachers especially in remote areas, WFP provides food support to both in-service teachers and teacher trainees. WFP also implemented 59 non-formal education and literacy training courses in 2005, reaching 18,199 trainees. Vulnerable women such as female heads of households and widows were specifically targeted for these initiatives.

55. The Government and the United Nations country team have established a joint programme on women's integrated functional literacy, under which measurable progress in the literacy rate of women is expected by 2008. The Government also aims for 100 per cent enrolment as part of the MDG targets for 2015, with girls'

enrolment at 50 per cent. The Government faces challenges to the achievement of this goal, for example lack of school facilities, in particular girls' schools in rural areas. The challenge is more formidable with regard to girls' secondary schools, which are very few and scattered. Other challenges, such as insecurity, the distance children have to go to get to schools, poverty, lack of female teachers, negative attitudes to girls' education and early marriages remain. Armed factions opposed to the Government have also targeted girls' schools and carried out terrorist attacks such as bombings or burning down schools and campaigning against female education.

56. UNESCO and UNDP are currently engaged in negotiations with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Kabul University to set up a Women/Gender Studies Institute at the University of Kabul. In addition to its academic and research functions, the Institute will contribute, inter alia, to the policy objectives outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action, the MDGs and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

C. Economic empowerment and poverty reduction

57. The economic empowerment of women is critical for Afghanistan's sustained recovery, reconstruction and development. The traditional role of women in Afghanistan is, however, a constraint to their equitable participation in economic activities. Female wage labour is still viewed as a solution of last resort for households in desperate straits and their wage rates are normally only half the level of men's, or even less. Women's involvement in the formal sector has mainly been urban-based, mostly as civil servants in the health and education sectors. In agricultural production, women have continued to play an important role. While most of women's labour remains non-remunerative, they make major labour contributions to a number of marketed products such as dried fruits, fuel wood, dairy products and handicrafts. However, even when women's domestic production, such as carpet weaving, forms the main income of the household, they rarely control the marketing of these products, which is most often managed by male relatives or middle men.

58. Several United Nations entities, including the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNDP, WHO, WFP and UNIFEM, and non-governmental organizations have continued to target women within the framework of different income-generation, employment and skills development projects, including the employment service centre project, the recovery and employment Afghanistan programme, the Afghan microfinance for employment project, and the national skills development and market linkages programme. In its training programmes for national staff, ILO provided technical assistance to ensure that gender perspectives were integrated into all aspects of the programmes. In its efforts to promote a rights-based approach to economic recovery, ILO has translated and disseminated fundamental labour standards, as well as its "ABC on women workers rights", and has raised awareness about their content in workshops held with workers' and employers' organizations. ILO has also developed a project to promote the re-entry of Afghan women (urban and rural) into the labour market. The Afghan Women's Business Council, supported by UNIFEM, has continued to assist women to market their products.

59. The Advisory Group on Gender has underlined the need to re-examine national poverty reduction programmes in order to sharpen their focus on women, particularly the economic empowerment of vulnerable groups such as widows, rural women living in remote communities with non-existent economic opportunities and female-headed households, as well as to ensure that constraints faced by women in accessing poverty reduction initiatives, including initiatives focused on skills development and employment, are identified and removed. Issues of land and property reform also require particular attention to ensure that the needs and rights of vulnerable groups, including households headed by women, are protected.

D. Return of refugees and internally displaced persons

60. On 30 August 2005, the accession of Afghanistan to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, marked a significant step in the country's recovery.

61. Between 1 January and 31 August 2005, a total of 367,694 Afghans were assisted by UNHCR to return to Afghanistan voluntarily, the majority returning from Pakistan (327,809 persons) and the Islamic Republic of Iran (39,885). Of these, 181,276 were girls and women, mainly returning from Pakistan. In addition to assisted returns, there were significant numbers of Afghans returning spontaneously, particularly from the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as some forcible returns of largely undocumented Afghans. Among those forcibly returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran since the beginning of 2005, were 65 unaccompanied female Afghans.

62. Afghanistan has been challenged by the influx of returnees, a trend that is likely to persist following the successful holding of elections. As a result, socio-economic investment must be increased in order to boost income generation of the population, especially the most vulnerable groups. As most of the returnees settle in urban areas, there has been an estimated 6 per cent annual growth rate in the urban population.

63. In cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and WFP, UNHCR started the organized return of internally displaced persons in May 2005, mainly from southern and western Afghanistan. Given the sizeable number of internally displaced persons who, by now, are generating their own income, efforts to enhance self-sufficiency are also reinforced.

64. Shelter continued to be one of the priority requests of returnees. Forty-six per cent of the beneficiaries of shelter projects are women. UNHCR has taken steps to ensure the involvement of women in implementation of the shelter project and projects related to health, water and employment.

VII. Coordination of United Nations and donor assistance

65. The third annual Afghanistan Development Forum was held in Kabul from 4 to 6 April 2005, with the participation of over 300 delegates from the Government and the international donor community. The Advisory Group on Gender had prepared a background note for the Forum, which drew attention to a number of areas identified by the Ministry of Women's Affairs as key to improving the overall status

of Afghan women, namely: health, education, legal protection, economic empowerment, eradication of violence against women, and women's participation in politics and public life. The presentations and discussions at the Forum fed into the development of the interim national development strategy, to be presented at an international donors conference in London in January 2006. The national development strategy will integrate follow-up to and implementation of MDGs.

66. The UNAMA Gender Unit continued to support and facilitate gender mainstreaming, including through designated gender focal points in UNAMA's regional offices and close collaboration with the provincial departments of women's affairs. Since 2002, the Unit has been coordinating an information and knowledge-sharing network for the United Nations country team gender focal points. Early in 2005, UNAMA revitalized the network of gender focal points as an advocacy mechanism and forum for information exchange. Several training activities for both international and national staff were organized and facilitated with a focus on gender awareness and sensitization as part of a mission policy to incorporate gender perspectives into all programmes and operations. Subjects covered included gender mainstreaming, women's rights, standards of conduct and gender and diversity. Assistance and facilitation were also offered to United Nations agencies, on demand. In addition, custom-made trainings were provided to respond to specific mission training needs. The UNAMA Gender Unit also developed a specific gender module for the civil administrators training programme of the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission.

67. In June 2005, the UNAMA Gender Unit presented a gender balance action plan to the United Nations Operations Managers Team, which included the goal of collecting sex-disaggregated data on the composition of the national and international staff of United Nations entities.

68. Different United Nations entities and international organizations, including ILO, UNDP, WFP and WHO, have made special efforts for mainstreaming gender in their work in Afghanistan, including in their technical and financial support to line ministries.

69. In August 2005, UNAMA launched a mission-wide information campaign and mandatory staff training programme on prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

VIII. Conclusion and recommendations

70. **With the elections to the Wolesi Jirga (House of the People) which resulted in 27 per cent women's representation in national parliament and 29 per cent in the provincial councils, the participation of Afghan women in public life has significantly increased. Among other gains made by women during the transition period following the Bonn talks on Afghanistan in 2001 are the following: greater awareness of gender equality issues within the Government and among the public at large; further steps made to reduce child and maternal mortality; and further steps to improve access to education and literacy of women and girls. The Government has increasingly addressed matters previously considered private, such as violence against women. These changes show that, provided with space and support from outside, Afghan women have**

demonstrated their capacity to engage constructively in public life and to make their contribution to peace and development.

71. Despite these gains, women and girls in Afghanistan face formidable security, human rights, social and economic challenges. The security situation and basic human rights conditions remain poor in many parts of the country, especially outside of Kabul. Armed factions, including the remaining Taliban forces, routinely abuse women's human rights. Many advances by women in the economic, employment and educational spheres are offset by the continuing effects of widespread poverty. Continuing discrimination against women in access to education, health care, land, credits and productive means stifle reconstruction and development efforts.

72. For the post-transitional period, promoting an inclusive, participatory and gender equal society that responds to the aspirations of all Afghan women and men continues to offer the best prospect for improving the overall security and development situation. To date, the steps taken by the Afghan Government, with support and advice from United Nations entities, towards this end are commendable and need to be further strengthened. The major challenge is to build on and sustain positive changes that resulted from the transition. Prompt and effective action on behalf of the Afghan Government, civil society and the international community is needed to promote and protect the human rights of women and girls and to put an end to gender-based discrimination. Economic and social assistance programmes need to build on women's acquired de jure rights, encourage women to participate in the public life and new economic tasks and activities and ensure more gender balance in accessing productive resources and labour markets.

73. To these ends, the Commission on the Status of Women may wish to consider the following recommendations, in addition to those made in previous reports on this subject, most of which are still valid.

74. The Government of Afghanistan should:

(a) Endorse the national action plan on gender equality, in compliance with the Beijing Platform for Action, and ensure that it is provided with sufficient resources across all sectors and fully implemented in consultation with women's civil society organizations;

(b) Take urgent measures to ensure the protection of civilians, in particular women and children;

(c) Strengthen the rule of law and the reform of the justice system, including through training of the judiciary and police; amend or abolish discriminatory laws, regulations, customs and practices; and criminalize violence against women and girls, including domestic violence;

(d) Take specific measures to improve women's access to justice, including through expanding the establishment of family courts and the recruitment and training of women in all Afghan courts;

(e) Develop effective gender-sensitive strategies for investigating allegations of violations of women's human rights and of international humanitarian law, facilitate the provision of remedies to the victims and bring the perpetrators to justice;

(f) **Strengthen measures to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence and develop support services, including health and psychosocial services and the establishment of family intervention units across the country;**

(g) **Release prisoners held in State detention centres for actions that do not constitute crimes under Afghan law, prohibit the confinement of women in the custody of private individuals, and provide women with adequate support for reintegration into their communities;**

(h) **Take resolute action to achieve measurable improvement in the social and economic situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, including through:**

(i) **Empowering women and girls economically and politically, including through sustainable capacity-building initiatives;**

(ii) **Supporting fully the equal right of women to work and strengthening efforts to promote their reintegration in employment in all sectors and at all levels of Afghan society;**

(iii) **Ensuring equal access to land and other productive assets;**

(iv) **Improving access to health services and health information;**

(v) **Increasing efforts to reduce and eliminate women's illiteracy; ensuring the full enrolment and retention of girls in primary education, increasing girls' attendance in secondary schools and higher education; training of female teachers; and eliminating discrimination against girls in schools;**

(vi) **Establishing mechanisms to monitor the progress achieved;**

(i) **Strengthen efforts to promote and facilitate the full, effective and equal participation of women at all levels and in all spheres of Afghan life, including in decision-making at all levels.**

75. **The United Nations system, donor Governments and civil society should:**

(a) **Ensure that the necessary resources are allocated to mainstream gender perspectives into all policies and programmes; that staff have the capacity and necessary tools to support them; and that targeted initiatives aimed at the empowerment of women and girls receive sufficient funding;**

(b) **Provide technical and financial support for reform and the strengthening of the judicial sector, including through merit-based recruitment in order to ensure that qualified women are given equal consideration in the process, training of judicial officers and rehabilitation of infrastructure;**

(c) **Continue to provide technical expertise and resources to the Ministry of Women's Affairs, line ministries and all governmental bodies in their efforts to mainstream gender and advance the situation of women and girls;**

(d) **Support sustainable capacity-building for Afghan women, including through information-sharing, access to resources, education and training, to enable them to participate fully in all societal sectors;**

(e) **Fully support the Government in eradicating violence against women;**

(f) **Ensure that donor actions supporting gender equality and the advancement of women and girls are more harmonized, transparent and collectively effective;**

(g) **Strengthen efforts to collect sex-disaggregated data across all sectors.**

Notes

[1] Information was received from the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNODC, UNOPS, WFP, WHO and the World Bank.

[2] A/59/744-S/2005/183 and A/60/224-S/2005/525.

[3] S/PV.5294.

[4] A/60/343.

[5] E/CN.4/2005/122.

[6] Thirty-five of the women were running for Provincial Council and 16 for the Wolesi Jirga.

[7] Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission-UNAMA Joint Verification of Political Rights, first report (19 April-3 June 2005); second report (4 June-16 August 2005); third report (17 August-13 September 2005).

[8] Members of the Advisory Group on Gender include UNAMA and other United Nations entities, the Joint Electoral Management Body, donor missions and international and civil society organizations. The Ministry of Women's Affairs holds the secretariat function.

[9] Data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

[10] E/CN.4/2005/122.

[11] Amnesty International, *Women still under attack — a systematic failure to protect* (London, 2005).